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MY MEMOIRS

BY: MARTIN BIRN

**TO MY WIFE ELAINE, SON DAVID, HIS WIFE BONNIE, DAUGHTER MERYL
AND MY GRAND-DAUGHTERS ANNA, SARAH AND LINDA**

By Martin Birn

Latest Revision: September 2007

Dear Loved Ones,

This account of my life and family history was started at your request around 1980, when I first had access to a word processor. Since the word processor capability was at work, the writing was done during lunch time. When my assignment changed and I no longer had a word processor available, I put this project aside, but not before I had a copy on the standard storage media of that time, a 8" floppy (in IBSEDIC format). Eventually I got it copied to a 5 1/4" IBM DOS format floppy disk and now it is backed up on a 3 1/2" floppy. Therefore, this enabled me in August 1990 to pick up where I left off. Writing and editing these memoirs has been and will continue to be a "work in progress" as I am continuing to learn more about my family. I have covered the period from birth to our first few years in Seattle. From there on, our annual letters pretty well summarize the family happenings. However, I have also elaborated on several events which happened in more recent times but which arose out of my childhood experiences. It is being written on my computer in Microsoft "Word 2003", at this time the most popular word processing program. The file name is "Marty2.DOC".

These writings are generally confined to historical accounts of my life. My thoughts on philosophy, religion, end of life issues etc. are in an "Ethical Will" whose initial draft was written in September 1998 and updated from time to time since then. As of this writing, I am not yet ready to share this with anyone. Incidentally, I discovered recently that preparing an ethical will is an old Jewish tradition.

And while I have no illusion about this writing earning a Pulitzer Prize in literature, I have tried to use my writing skills and not put you to sleep in the second paragraph.

In May of 2007, Elaine has put her life experience on a CD thanks to the "Story Tell" program of the Seattle Senior Services. So you have both sides of the family covered. As you know, her life and family history is completely different from mine but just as interesting, since she, too overcame difficult times in her own way.

You will notice that my writing includes more about my father's side of the family than my mother's. This is because I was exposed to that side a lot more and have more information, including a complete genealogy back to great-great-grandfather Abraham Birn born in 1774 and great-grandfather Maier Birn, after whom I am named (the family last name was always "Birn"- never derived or shortened from another name, at least as far as I could trace back). More about that later. Incidentally, nobody on either my father or mother's side of the family had a middle initial or name, I guess it just wasn't the custom.

I was born on February 15, 1926 in Schweinfurt am Main, Bavaria, Germany, the only child of Sali (nickname Seppi) and Betty Birn, born Blumenthal. My mother, who was also born in Schweinfurt, owned a millinery (woman's hats) store 7 years prior to her marriage to my father in 1921. The store was located in Schweinfurt at the intersection of two main streets on the market square diagonally across from City Hall. I learned in the spring of 2006 (from Elisabeth Böhrer. She is a historian who used to live in Schweinfurt and has researched data for me) that my mother actually started the business in 1914 shortly before the start of WW I at the age of 21. Imagine a woman at the young age 21 starting a business and being successful at it until her death 20 years later in what at that time was very much a man's world. What a gutsy woman she must have been. I assume the business was prosperous (until Hitler came to power and the Nazi boycott started in 1933) based on our lifestyle, which I would characterize as upper middle class. I remember my mother having two or three employees making hats in the store's back room. Beside hats, she also handled gloves, purses and occasionally wedding gowns. I don't imagine there was too much competition in Schweinfurt. Because my mother was the bread-earner of the family and worked full time and I was looked after principally by a nanny, my memory of her is very vague. We also had a cook, so I do not know if she had any culinary skills. I have no idea where the nanny and cook lived, since we had only a one-bedroom apartment on the first floor of a 3-story apartment house a half mile or so from the store. You two kids saw the house on our first trip to Schweinfurt in 1972 and I have a photo of that event. One of the memorable things about the house was the enormous side yard I remembered as a child with its bushes of currants, and how that yard had shrunk to postage stamp size in the intervening years. My father, who was born in the village of Estenfeld near Würzburg was a bookkeeper or accountant by education (I am not sure if there was a difference then). He worked for a bank in Aschaffenburg, quit his job there and moved to Schweinfurt on April 12, 1920 (per information received from Elisabeth Böhrer on April 7, 2004). He married my mother on Jan. 4, 1921 in Schweinfurt. There he worked at (her) store as bookkeeper, waited on trade, and accompanied my mother on her buying trips. Unfortunately I have no information about when, where or how they met or their courtship. The business stayed in her name "Betty Blumenthal" even after her marriage until it was sold after her death in 1934.

We never owned an automobile, nor did any of our friends or relatives in Schweinfurt. People either worked within walking distance of their home or took public transportation. To the best of my knowledge, neither parent knew how to drive. The apartment I referred to above was not the place I was born. My album shows us living in a different sort of house. I learned from Frau Böhrer (see above) that my parents moved to Klingenbrunnerstr.13 on 1 August 1923 and to Untere Wall 10 (the apartment referred to above which I remember) on 1 July 1929. I have no information where they lived between their marriage in 1921 and 1923. It could have been at Grandfather Louis's house, since it was very large with many bedrooms.

Schweinfurt was a good-sized industrialized city (80-100,000 population in the 1930's, 60,000 in 2000) best known for being the home of several major ball-bearing factories. I always thought that it had a good-sized Jewish community, but I was wrong. According to the Encyclopedia of Judaica, there were 363 Jews in Schweinfurt in 1933 and 120 in 1939 (according to the same source, three Jews lived there in 1969). I still remember the names of some of my playmates, or at least the ones which were my age. There was Ann Haas and her elder brother Martin. And the Baers, Albert and Annie and the Brandis who had a daughter named Charlotte and the

Walters, whose son Louis (Lou) was a good friend. The Haases and Brandis and Walters all emigrated to NY, where I visited with them during my early years in the U.S. Al Bear ended up in San Francisco and was an acquaintance of Ida Weiss, a cousin of my fathers who you visited once but probably do not remember. Their parents were all in some sort of business, I don't remember any Jews in Germany who were not white collar or independent business persons. At this writing, I am still in touch with Ann Haas (Rosenberg) and her brother Martin. I was also in touch with Lou Walter, another childhood friend, until his death in 2007 in New York. I was told that Lou Walter's mother was my "Milk Mother". In other words, she nursed me at the same time as her own son since my mother was not willing or able to nurse me (I suspect the former since she needed to run her business).

Since I was basically raised by a nanny, didn't see my mother that much and moved to Stuttgart in 1934 even before her death, my memories of her and life in Schweinfurt are sparse. I know she was orthodox, so we kept a kosher house. We had separate sets of everyday china and silver for meat and dairy (in German its "Fleischich and Milchich"), good china and silver for meat and dairy and Passover dishes for meat and dairy, altogether 6 sets of china and silver and three sets of pots and pans. I wonder today where we kept all of these? The only thing I still have and brought with me to America are two silver soup spoons, which are in daily use and a silver egg cup and spoon with its case. As I remember being told by my father, the egg cup was a present from my paternal grandfather at my birth. Why an egg cup, I have no idea. I don't think it was traditional, since I have not heard of anyone else getting such a present. The paper which cites all the things I got permission to bring to America says that the spoons were purchased in 1890. This means that my parents inherited them from their parents (probably from the maternal side of the family). The egg cups purchase date is given as 1926, which tends to confirm the information from my father. The good china was Rosenthal with a silver or gold band around the edge. I have no idea what happened to all of that or the furniture after my mother's death. My father, on the other hand, enjoyed eating a few slices of ham or other non-kosher meats from time to time. He would eat it off the wrapping paper using his pocket knife (every German, male and female, always carries a pocket knife) while sitting on a park bench. He never brought any non-kosher food into the house, and I don't know if my mother was aware of this indiscretion and if so her attitude toward it. Most Jewish families, especially in smaller towns, kept a kosher house as much for social reasons as religious convictions, since observant Jews could not accept meal invitations in non-observant houses. Most likely our business was closed on Saturday so that my parents could go to the Saturday morning services at the synagogue, but I am not sure. It was definitely closed on Sunday, because all businesses were closed on Sunday (especially in Bavaria, which is predominantly Roman Catholic).

The Encyclopedia Judaica has a picture of the Rabbi's quarters and school building. The synagogue (there was only one in Schweinfurt) was behind the school building with a courtyard between. The address was Siebenbrückleingasse 14 (per Frau Böhrer). I remember the Sukkot being erected in the courtyard. The synagogue was of course orthodox, with the women sitting in the balcony. The social life of the Schweinfurt Jewish community centered around the one Jewish cafe - Cafe Frankenberger at Lange Zehntstrasse (I don't have the number). The men (including my father) played "Skat", a game somewhat similar to pinochle. The women played bridge and the kids ran around and ate a lot of pastry. I still remember the name of the waitress - Kate. She was gentile, had black hair with a streak of white down the center, had worked there

probably all her working life and was part of the institution. I don't believe there was much social intercourse between Jews and gentiles in Germany even before Hitler, however there were many gentiles who had worked for Jews for many years. Like anywhere else, their loyalty and anti-Semitic feelings would have depended on how they were treated.

A word about the maternal side of my family is in order. Grandfather Louis Blumenthal had 5 children by his first wife (two of which died shortly after birth) and five by his second. His first wife was Lena Neuman (although her death certificate uses her given name as Helene) from Schwebheim, a village just a few miles from Schweinfurt. His second wife's maiden name (my grandmother) was Jetta Stiefel. See the family tree which is an attachment. Both my maternal and paternal grandmother died before I was born. The surviving children from Grandfather Louis' first marriage were two boys, Leopold and Moritz and a girl, Nanny although her birth certificate (which I got in 2002) gives her name as Nachmu. Neither her son Bill who I asked nor any of her grandchildren or I ever heard of the name "Nachmu" or have any idea when or why the change to Nanny took place. The boys—Leopold and Moritz—at age eight and ten respectively went skating on the Main (the river by which Schweinfurt is located) in the winter of 1891. One of them fell through the ice, and when his brother tried to rescue him, he also broke through and they both drowned. What a tragedy that was. See the attached newspaper clipping which talked about it. The daughter, my Tante Nanny, came to the US before World War I. More about her later. The children of Grandfather Louis' second marriage (after his first wife died) were (in chronological order) Uncle Justin, Tante Paula (Richwalski), Tante Selma (Fischer), my mother and Uncle Max.

While living in Schweinfurt, I spent a lot of time with Uncle Max, his wife Tante Hedwig and their daughter, Cousin Lotte. Lotte is 1 1/2 years older than I. Uncle Max was the only relative we had in Schweinfurt. He ran Grandfather Louis's butcher shop as long as I have known him and inherited it. Grandfather Louis lived with Uncle Max until his death in 1929. The butcher shop and living quarters, which were over and behind the shop, were maybe 10 blocks away from where our store was. It was also the house my mother was born and grew up in. It was a very large rambling 2-story house with probably a half dozen bedrooms on the second floor. On the first floor behind the butcher shop was the living room, dining room and kitchen. In the rear around a central courtyard was a place for butchering and making sausage and stalls for the animals to be butchered. Keeping of live animals and butchering had been done elsewhere for a number of years; therefore the area around the courtyard was empty with lots of places for storage and for playing. I found out from Lotte (in 1991) that Uncle Max was not a kosher butcher; however he did not sell pork. He bought his meat already butchered. That meant that my mother (who kept a kosher house) could not have gotten her meat from him. There must have also been a kosher butcher in town. Apparently, with less than 400 Jews in Schweinfurt, there was not enough business to support two kosher butchers. Lotte (who now lives in Connecticut) told me recently (in 2006) that there was another non-kosher Jewish butcher in town and also one kosher Jewish butcher.

Schweinfurt is probably well known among WWII European U.S. Army Air Force veterans for a B-17 raid October 14, 1943. Its purpose was to bomb the ball-bearing factories located there and vital to the German war effort. They produced more than 40% of the ball-bearings required by them for the machinery necessary to pursue the war. Unfortunately, the Germans were

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expecting the raid and 77 out of 291 our bombers did not make it back to England - one of the greatest airplane losses during one raid in that war. Also lost were 650 men out of a total crew of 2900. The date became known among American aviators as "Black Thursday". (No further raid deep into Germany was attempted until we had developed fighter planes with the required range to escort the bombers all the way to their target. This took about 6 month till the early part of 1944).

To give you a feel for the character of the family, I will here insert a translation of two letters send to Tante Nanny. The first letter was written by Grandfather Louis on the death of his second wife, my grandmother and Tante Nanny's step-mother. The second letter was written by my mother, (who was Tante Nanny's step-sister) on the death of their father, my grandfather. Cousin Lillian, Tante Nanny's youngest daughter was kind enough to send me Xerox copies of the original letters several years ago and I had them translated. I believe you have seen them before, but I am including them here so the content does not get lost or forgotten.

December 5, 1924

My dear Nanny, Morris and children,

I hope that Morris and the children are well again. Here, too, many people have bronchitis. Unfortunately, I have to write this letter with a heavy heart. But I cannot keep this to myself any more but have to tell you, dear Nanny, the sad news which is very hard for me to do that your dear mother died on November 20th. *(Note: This was not her mother but her step-mother. Tante Nanny's mother, born Lena Neumann, died in 1883, when Tante Nanny was 3 years old, probably from childbirth after the birth of Tante Nanny's youngest brother Leopold).* She was on her back for 16 weeks and suffered a great deal. One should be glad that she finally found her eternal rest. Her heart gave out. Dear Paula was here for 8 weeks and nursed her till her last breath. Selma was also here for 14 days and Betty was at her bedside daily. Without the good care she received, she would not have lasted as long as she did. Your dear mother was 68 years old. She was the crown jewel of the house. She didn't allow herself any rest. She worried and worked until her final sickness. Unfortunately for me, I am finding the loss very difficult. She left behind a wonderful reputation. There were lots of people at the funeral, both Christians and Jews. Dr. Stein gave a long sermon. Paula and Selma as well as their husbands were at the funeral. Paula and Betty sat Shiva with us and the men made a minion twice. Justin and his wife went back to Stuttgart after the funeral. Max and my daughter-in-law and Betty and her husband are going to the synagogue diligently to say Kadish. Your dear mother, despite her illness got great pleasure out of the child which is now 10 weeks old. *(ed. this is Cousin Lotte)* She enjoyed it greatly when she was brought to her bed. I too am enjoying the little child, especially when she is laughing. Despite her severe illness, she enjoyed the baby. Now again my best wishes that you comfort yourself, dear Nanny. Your mother is better off. Her illness was very painful. Uncle Meir also took it very hard. Dear Hedwig, Max's wife is very kind and does anything I could wish for. I have to be satisfied with that. We have been married for 40 years. Please let me hear how Morris and the children are, dear Nanny.

Greetings and kisses to all of you, your father and grandfather

Louis

P.S. The date of death was Nov. 20th, the 23rd day in Chevuous.

Here is a translation of the second letter, written by my mother (with postscript by my father):

20 January 1930

My Dears:

I hope that you all, especially you, dear Nanny and Morris feel well. Also in this respect, everything here with us is in best order. And that in today's bad times means a lot. But one has a variety of other worries and grief, therefore I must tell you, dear sister, unfortunately very sad news. Our dear good father is no more. On 30 December, 28th day of Kislev, (4th day of Channukah) quite suddenly and unexpectedly he passed away due to a heart attack. I will give you the details. Father had arteriosclerosis for many years which occasionally bothered him quite a bit; therefore one had to be prepared that he could go very quickly. But especially during recent times, Papa was quite well. And the day before his death, he still visited the cafe, had enjoyed his evening meal and went to bed as usual. Father used the room upstairs where the restaurant used to be as his bedroom. When the maid came into his room the following morning to light the fire, father was dead in his bed. The doctor said that based on the condition he was found, it can be assumed that he died in his sleep. Therefore he had no struggle. If one considers that he was nearly 79 years old, rationally one should not complain too much, although it hurts to think we have no parents any more. But it is the order of the world that children should bury their parents. You, dear Nanny, unfortunately haven't seen father for a long time, haven't talked to him and only remember him from his younger years. He had a very hard life until about 15 years ago. Then things became better, and in the last 10 years father had a very good and worry-free life. One can say that he had a very good golden age. Max has a very good active business. He is capable and diligent and understands his trade. And also Hedwig, Max's wife helps him out whenever necessary. Sometimes I believe that Papa knew his days were numbered - the way he sent you something and other indications. The death announcement and also the speech are enclosed. Father was very much honored. The butchers were there with their banners and many other people were present to pay their last respects. We didn't write to you sooner, dear sister, to make sitting Schiva easier for you. You now have to sit for one hour, because when the letter arrives, the prescribed mourning period will be over. Everyone was here with the exception of Paula. She couldn't leave her small child. So father lived five years after mother's death.

Because there were so many matters to be dealt with, Justin was here yesterday to talk with Max and us about the inheritance. There isn't much there. The main item is the house. Max had bought that very cheaply during the time of the great inflation after the war. It should be valued much higher than the actual sales price. The main point I want to make is that whatever value he assigns will be done on his own free will because he feels morally obligated. I am also writing you as the official spokesman for the family. Although you are not with us, you will get the same share as the rest. You are, in spite of our great distance apart, a sister and will suffer no

disadvantage. Max will pay to each of the five children 2000 Mark in two installments of 1000 Mark each. He will pay the first installment in the very near future, and the second installment in the fall. You may also remember that we own a lot that is now quite close to town. Houses have been built pretty close to it, so it can now be considered a city lot. Only the city is interested in it and has expressed an interest in buying it from us. We hope it should bring us between 6000 and 7000 Mark. That too will be divided into 5 parts which means that altogether everyone will get about 3500 Mark. It could be that the lot will bring much less if the city doesn't want it. We will of course endeavor to get as much as we can for it, because all of us unfortunately could use the money. I am enclosing the legal papers which you will have to sign and return to us as soon as possible, so that we can send you the money.

How are your children and you both? Our boy is nearly four years old and gives us a lot of joy. All the relatives were at Papa's funeral. It is so that only at these occasions does one remember ones family. Simon and Lena Katz, Uncle Leopold from Mühlhausen and Selma Stiefel's husband were all here. Justin and Walter Fischer, Selma's married step-son were here yesterday. Walter said he had corresponded with your children and will write again. I am also sending you an old picture which we found in father's effects. I am sure it will be of interest to you, dear Nanny. Now I have written extensively and in great detail. All of us hope that the family bond will not be loosened by the death of our dear father. On the contrary we hope you will continue to write as you did before.

In that sense, I send you my best regards and am with a fond kiss

Your sister, sister-in-law and aunt

Betty

P.S. Is Aunt Dora still alive? (*I have no idea who Aunt Dora is*)

Dear Sister-in-law,

As husband of your sister, I have committed myself to take care of your interests as well as ours. The matter above has been fully explained by my wife. In order to resolve this matter, we need the enclosed power of attorney sent back as soon as possible with the necessary signatures. I have to add that the consulate near you is the only place where the proper notary certification can be done. The consulate will have all the information you may require.

Yours sincerely

Sali

Every time I read these two letters it gives me a sense of pride to have ancestors with such high ethical standards and sense of decency. It provides a role model for me to emulate those standards.

Uncle Max, Tante Hedwig and Lotte immigrated to New York in 1937. When I came to America, they had a 1-bedroom third floor walk-up apartment on Parkside Avenue in Brooklyn near the Parkside BMT station. Uncle Max worked as a butcher on the nightshift at the Waldorf Astoria Hotel until his retirement in the '60s. Incidentally, although Uncle Max did not keep a kosher house, was not religious in any form, and did indeed cut pork at work, he never ate any. It just went against his upbringing.

Once, at the age of 5 or 6, I spent a week or two with Lotte at her maternal grandmother's (Tante Hedwig's mother) home in a village not too far from Schweinfurt called Kleineibstadt. Lotte said we got there by train, since no one owned a car. Oma (grandmother) Reinholt was a wonderful grandmotherly type of woman. She was a widow from the time I remembered her and came to America about the same time as Uncle Max. She lived with two other of her children until they died. Then she lived with Lotte on Long Island until her death at a very advanced age (in her early 90's I think) being sound of mind and body till the end. My father, who didn't get along too well with Tante Hedwig (his sister-in-law), nevertheless used to go to the Blumenthal house just to visit with Oma Reinholt, and I know the Oma was very fond of him as well as of me.

A few isolated things I remember from my life in Schweinfurt: We had a brass Chanukah menorah which had built into its base a music box which played the melody for "Mo Ous Zur" the traditional Chanukah song. When I was 5 or 6 years old, on the eve of St. Nicholas Day (Dec. 6th), after I had gone to bed but was not yet asleep there was a knock on the apartment door. My parents told me to see who it was. Outside the door, lo and behold there was a puppet theater brought, I was told, by the "Chanukah Angel". I also remember the picture hanging on the wall by my bed. It was an etching of the head of a rabbi, with a blessing in Hebrew written under it. As the result of horsing around one day, the picture fell to the floor breaking the glass and frame. I don't know what my punishment was, but I don't remember ever being spanked. Also there was a large picture of a not very sexy female nude hanging in my parent's bedroom. I guess Uncle Max or Tante Hedwig must have admired it, because my father gave it to them when he broke up the household after my mother died. It was still in the family and hanging in a bedroom - Lotte's that is, on Long Island last time I saw it. I used to look at it whenever I visited her. She too is apparently very fond of it, because the many hints I have made about my wanting to acquire it were always turned down cold. Which is probably just as well, because it really wouldn't fit into the decor of our house. Now that she no longer lives there, (she separated from her husband in 2004) it is in the bedroom of their son who still lives in the Long Island house with his father.

My favorite place to visit in Germany was the Birn ancestral home on the "Zinnergasse" in Estenfeld. Uncle Friedel (his real name was Siegfried but nobody called him that), my father's youngest brother, lived in Estenfeld and had a car (I think it was a '26 Chrysler) and he would pick us up in Schweinfurt and drive to Estenfeld, a distance of maybe 40 miles. I don't know how often we would visit there, but I loved these visits. I was the only male Birn child, and everybody in Estenfeld made a big fuss over me.

Since Estenfeld loomed large in my childhood, let me give you a rundown on who lived there. The Birn genealogy chart will help. First there was Grandfather Sigmund. Up until his death in

1934, he was the patriarch of the family and lived in the house on Zinnergasse, which was build by his father about 1880. He shared his household with his brother Joseph, Joseph's wife Carry and their children Bella (Sohn) and Tilde (Raya Kohn) and Grandfather Sigmunds youngest son (my father's brother) Uncle Friedel.

Uncle Friedel was my favorite uncle. As I mentioned above, he was the only one in the family who owned a car. He was a great tinkerer - we would call him a do-it-yourself junkie today. He was also a serious amateur photographer who did his own developing and enlarging. Many of the pictures in my album were taken by him with his Leica. Because he could not bend his right knee - as the result of some kind of childhood disease- he had the brake pedal and clutch pedal on his cars reversed, so that in case of an emergency, he could apply the brake quickly. Therefore, he would not let anybody else drive it. The garage in the yard in Estenfeld had a grease-pit build in, quite ahead of the times. The knee problem also kept him out of World War I.

After the death of my paternal grandmother Lena in 1925 (6 month before I was born), Tante Carry became the family matriarch. She not only had the considerable burden of taking care of her own husband (Uncle Joseph was severely debilitated by Parkinson's as far back as I can remember) and children but also my grandfather (her brother-in-law) and Uncle Friedel (her nephew). She was the typical Jewish super-mother with a heart greater than the entire outdoors. She did have help as was typical. It was a non-Jewish woman from the village who was almost Tante Carry's age, had been working for the family her entire life, was considered part of the family and treated as such and I guess was strong enough mentally to fight off the pressures she had no doubt to endure to continue working for Jews. As far as I remember, she worked for the family up until they had to leave the Zinnergasse house after Kristallnacht, November 9th 1938.

Half the first floor of the house was occupied by the family business, a general store, with heavy emphasis on dry goods. As you can well imagine, the store was a fascinating place for a curious child. There was a huge roll top desk at one side which was the office, and floor to ceiling shelving holding bolts of cloth. A small section was devoted to coffee, tea and spices which gave the store a smell like the mixture of a Starbucks coffee store and the spice factory that used to be on Dearborn street here in Seattle. It was in the store that I saw my first Sears Roebuck catalog. I have no idea how it got there. Of course I couldn't read the words (which were in English), but the illustrations absorbed me for many hours. It probably served as my introduction to the world of ladies undergarments. Bella and Raya worked in the store waiting on trade. Uncle Friedel was on the road, buying and selling cattle (the German word is 'Viehhandler'). It was a profession many Jews living in rural areas engaged in. I think he also did wholesale buying and selling of dry goods.

The house had a large attic full of wondrous things like military uniforms, swords, spike helmets etc. from World War I (my father fought in WW I, but more about that later) and many other odds and ends for a kid to play with. The Estenfeld house also had the only flush toilet in the village, complete with sink for washing hands. Of course it was not in the house but across the yard where the outhouse used to be. All the villagers came to admire it when it was first installed (it must have been before 1933, otherwise the villagers would not have visited). There was running water in the village, but no one had running hot water. The bathroom was in the

second floor of the house. It consisting of a sink and bathtub and there was a large wood-fired water heater. It took several hours of keeping the fire stoked to get enough hot water for a bath, so this was a once-a-week ritual which took the whole day for everyone to get a turn. There was no central heating, every room had its own stove (fireplaces were rare in Germany). Of course the large kitchen was the focal point, especially in the winter. Electric refrigerators were extremely rare. I didn't see my first one until I came to the U.S. There was a cellar under the house which was used for food storage. In the cities, the icebox was standard with most people getting ice only during the summer. Since everyone shopped daily and bought in small quantities, lack of refrigeration was not a big problem.

Also living in Estenfeld in a house just off the main highway to Würzburg was Uncle Isaac, another of Grandfather Sigmund's brothers. It is the house where Anton (Tony) Birn (who we visited and who is now deceased) and his second wife live on the second floor and his son and family live on the first floor. Tony Birn's father, Uncle Leopold, was my grandfather's youngest brother. He married a Gentile, so he was somewhat of an outcast (something I did not learn until the 1970's), although he did visit his brothers several times a year and was always welcome. Uncle Leopold lived in Würzburg, and made these trips to Estenfeld by bicycle. His wife was never mentioned and I didn't even know he was married, much less had children and grandchildren. I've never seen a photo of her and didn't think to ask Tony on my visit to him in 1971. It has come to my attention just recently that Uncle Leopold didn't formally marry his wife until 1925 when his oldest child was 26 years old and his grandchild (Friederike Seidl from Munich) was 7 years old. The delay in marriage, I was told recently, had something to do with inheritance - needing to wait until one of the Birn wives died (I don't know the details).

There was one other Jewish family in Estenfeld during my time - the Löwenthals. It was the Löwenthal house that all the Birns had to move into after Kristallnacht. No doubt having more than one family living in one relatively small house created all sort of problems, which I fortunately was not privy to, since I lived in Stuttgart at that time and only visiting Estenfeld for the brief Christmas vacation. The Löwenthals died in the Holocaust, but their daughter emigrated to the US. I met her quite by accident in Denver when I started college. I believe her husband worked in the Registrar's office of the U. of Denver.

I remember just one playmate in Estenfeld, the kid from across the street (Zinnergasse) who was my age. His father was the village cobbler, as well as a farmer. I doubt if I had any other playmates, the cultural gap between an upper middle class Jewish urban kid and a Catholic farm boy would have been enormous. Also in those days, there was already a stigma against fraternizing with Jews.

One experience in Estenfeld is still vivid in my mind. That was the day I learned where babies come from. I visited the cobbler's barn to find one of his cows just starting to give birth to a calf, and I was put to work as an assistant midwife, helping to pull the calf out of the cow. Quite an experience for a 10 or 11 year old city kid.

In 1932 at age 6, I started in elementary school in Schweinfurt. My teacher (they were all male then) was a strict disciplinarian. He must have been a fairly old man since my mother told me he was her teacher as well some 30 years earlier. I still remember learning the multiplication

tables in second grade. It must have been a painful experience, since the teacher was liberal in using a bamboo switch for reinforcing lessons.

In the spring of 1934, Uncle Justin, my mother's oldest brother, visited us in Schweinfurt with his new wife, Tante Frieda. He was on his honeymoon after being a widow for three years (his first wife committed suicide -she was never mentioned, at least in my presence). He probably visited Schweinfurt a few times while his father, my grandfather Louis Blumenthal was still alive but this was his first visit in several years, I presume because I do not remember earlier visits. He invited me to spend the summer at his home in Stuttgart, an offer my parents accepted. The visit would last five years.

While I was in Stuttgart during summer of 1934, my mother went to Stettin to explore the business opportunities there, since the boycott against Jewish merchants in Schweinfurt had a serious effect on the business. I don't know the reason for picking Stettin, except her older sister, Tante Selma Fischer lived there, it was a larger city than Schweinfurt and in a different part of the country.

I am inserting here the translation of two letters written by my mother at that time in Stettin and send to her friend Martha Haas in Schweinfurt. The first one was hand written dated 1 Sept. 1934. The second one was obviously typed in a hurry (with a number of overtypings and cross-outs) and is undated and unsigned. It appears to have been written just a day or two after the first letter and may very well be the last letter she wrote. I just got the originals in September of 1991. I am leaving the story of how I got these letters (and three other letters) for later in order to maintain the chronological order.

Stettin, 9.1.34

My dear Friends!

You have heard in the meantime from my husband my good arrival. Yesterday and also today, I have seen and heard quite a bit and the more that is the case, the more I become confused and undecided. The responsibility for me is enormously great. Therefore, I wrote to my husband that he should come here as soon as possible. In fact, if one is in this place and sees all the difficulties, it naturally affects the mood and ability to make decisions. There are enough stores here. In good locations, they are very expensive and in other areas they don't bring in the customers that pass by. I don't know at all whether I should take a salon (ed. a show-room in a 2nd floor walk-up) or a store. One person advises me to do one thing, one another. The local public is used to buy in stores and they would have to be educated to go upstairs. It would be difficult for us under any condition, and (ed. the educational process would come) late for this big city. Though my relatives have given great recommendations, in spite of this people don't know what I can do. At times I am pretty discouraged. Not surprising, after living through so many hard times. It strains the heart. However, we will not rush things unduly. I would rather wait till spring. Do you agree? When I am here, I realize how one is attached by the string of ones heart to ones home. How I am grown to Schweinfurt, although I have no reason whatsoever to think about it. People are closer to my nature and I know them. They have known

what to expect from me. Here it will be very slow to acquire trust. All this gives many worries and heartaches. It is for this reason that I am doubly pleased when finally my husband will be here. In the meantime, I ask you to call Seppl (ed. and tell him) I am very busy. We will make a decision when he comes, although I would like to save him the trip.

How are all of you? How are you, dear Martha? Up to Berlin I had very amusing company. A Rumanian professor of philosophy for a visit to Germany for study purposes. It was very interesting for me. I don't know how long I will stay here. It depends on the decision to rent. If we decide, I would perhaps come home for Rosh Hashono, because at that time I will be in a hurry to make the final decision. Let my husband tell you everything else.

Many greetings from the heart

Your Friend Betty Birn

My regards to all acquaintance

In case Seppl is not gone yet, he should bring along the summer coat for Selma. Otherwise it will be taken care of later.

Here is the translation of the second letter:

Dear Haases, I must bother you again to act as an in-between and ask you to give the enclosed letter to my husband, because I do not know whether he is still in Estenfeld. Also, I do not understand why I have so far not had any word from Martha. While I do not want to bother you with my problems, I do not understand why I have not heard anything.

With the New Year upon us, I wish to send all of you my heartiest congratulations and hope sincerely the coming year will bring greater satisfaction to all of us. Aside from these sentiments, you should also know that my friendship for you is genuine and that I wish all of you the best. Have a good holiday (Yom Tov) and all of you have my heartiest greetings, yours

My mother had been there only a short while when she showed symptoms of what was diagnosed as leukemia (probably acute myelogenous leukemia or A.M.L., a form most common in adults). This was about the beginning of September, just a couple of days after the above letters were written. She went immediately back home and was admitted to the hospital in Würzburg where she died less than 3 weeks later, Sept. 22, 1934, 6 weeks short of her 41st birthday.

After the end of the summer vacation I was told that I could not return home because my mother was very sick in the hospital. So I started 3rd grade in the public school in Stuttgart. It was much later, perhaps a month after the death of my mother that I was told she had died and that the trip Uncle Justin and Tante Frieda had taken earlier was to her funeral. I remember absolutely nothing of my reaction or grieving.

I am including here the translation of a letter also given to me in September 1991 which gives another persons reaction to my mothers death. The author, I have been told, was a business associate of my mothers - perhaps a salesman, but also a personal friend of the family. It was handwritten on hotel stationery and is addressed to my father.

Weimar, the 11th of October, 1934

My dear good friend

This morning I received your letter, and even now after (several) hours, I am not able to take in its news. I feel like weeping, dear friend. Understand me. I'll weep to accept the certainty that Betty is no more. Your Betty, let me say it this time, this conception of life, and joy of life. Dear friend, I will and wish to console you. You and your son, but I really can not because weeping is in my throat. All day long, the words of the Tora "Wajhi eref, wj'hi wauker jaum ecior. -Evening and morning - life and darkness the same day. So was the world built by the Almighty and over and over He sends us always good things and sad ones. My dear friend I cannot express in words and bring onto paper what is in my heart. I cannot picture what you and M went through again and again. God has (taken) much - everything from you. But does not the Jewish faith teach that he is blessed with the other hand when he is punished, dear Birn. Please, please do not despair. Double the love to your child. Keep him near your heart and accept the only consolation which God left you, from his kisses and his eyes.

Due to special circumstances I did not come over lately. Just yesterday I had to change my trip, otherwise I would have been with you today. I will call you as soon as I possibly can.

With warm affection, I remain

Always, yours truly

Walter Berju

Of course life in Stuttgart was much different from that in Schweinfurt. For one, Uncle Justin had a son, Kurt. He was several years older than I and mildly retarded, as well as subject to occasional epileptic fits due to a childhood disease (I think it was spinal meningitis). I don't remember anything about my relation with him. I think I pretty much tolerated him and ignored him as much as possible. He did not go to school. They had a nanny - a young Jewish woman - who looked after him. Also, they did not keep a kosher house, (although they probably didn't eat pork product) so my diet was much different. But I don't remember that the new experience of mixing meat and dairy products at a meal caused me any trauma. I guess my religious upbringing had not been very doctrinaire.

The apartment in Stuttgart was very large by German standards and served as Uncle Justin's place of business as well as home. It was a third floor walk-up with large living room, dining room, large office, storage room, play room, and at least two bedrooms. It was beautifully

furnished in a modern style. There was a grand piano in the living room which nobody could play. Uncle Justin was in the oil import business and incidentally had a car, an Opel, probably fairly new. I remember Uncle Justin driving the family to Baden-Baden in the Black Forest, not too far from Stuttgart, and me getting car sick on the way.

I don't remember how long I stayed in public school in the fall of 1934, probably only a semester or two. In any case I, along with all Jewish kids in Stuttgart, was expelled from public school and started going to Jewish school. It was in a building next to the synagogue. Since Stuttgart had a large and prosperous Jewish community (according to the Encyclopedia of Judaica, the Jewish population of Stuttgart in 1933 was 4900) the synagogue was a large and beautiful structure and the school was in a new modern building. In addition to the normal subjects, we all had to take Hebrew and English for at least an hour a day. Unlike the German kids who went (and still go) a half day on Saturday, we went to school for only five days a week. But of course we were expected to go to the synagogue for religious services on Saturday morning. Outside of some of these vignettes, my memories of Stuttgart between 1934 and 1938 are rather dim. Uncle Justin and Tante Frieda were both easy going and goodhearted persons who were fond of me and probably enjoyed having a "normal" child around as a counterpoint to the more difficult job of dealing with Kurt. They probably got lots of strokes from my father on his visits. Of course he always counseled me to "be a good boy" and on my question to Tante Frieda a few years ago, she said that I was an easy child to raise. My life was probably very similar to other Jewish kids growing up in an upper middle class family in the tense and stressful environment that was Nazi Germany in the 30's. The only difference being that I did a lot more traveling, spending many vacations in Estenfeld, and also visited other relatives from time to time.

One of these visits was to Uncle Adolph, my father's oldest brother. He and Tante Sira and their daughter (my cousin) Lieselotte (Lilo) lived in Weiden an die Oberpfalz. He was a tailor, and I still remember him sitting cross-legged on a big cutting table. They immigrated to Buenos Aires around 1936 or '37. I was in Estenfeld for a visit when they came through Estenfeld to say good-bye on the way to Argentina. It was also the time when the two brothers, Uncle Adolf and Uncle Friedel made up. They had been on non-speaking terms for many years, neither one probably remembering why. My father used to be the go-between. I think it was then that I made up my mind not to hold a grudge against a family member for very long, no matter what the circumstances. I kept in touch with Uncle Adolph up to his death. I think their lives in Buenos Aires were not easy. Lilo married a German Jew (named Hirsch) living in Santiago, Chile and moved there. She was widowed, remarried and is still living in Santiago. We had not been in touch until about 1985 or '86, when she and her second husband (Joachim Model) surprised us with a short visit here in Seattle. They were on the way to visit his two sons who live in Montreal. We now keep in touch. They repeatedly invited us to stay with them in Santiago and we took advantage of their hospitality in December 1995 for the occasion of the Bar Mitzva of their middle grandson Juavier Fernandez. Joachim died in 2000, so Lilo is again a widow. Incidentally, we just got a wedding invitation (in March 2007) from Rodrigo Fernandez Hirsch, Lilo's oldest grandson. He married on April 21st of this year. We send our regrets and a cash gift.

My father came to visit me probably every 6 weeks or two months. His visits were eagerly awaited by me, and he never wore out his welcome in Stuttgart because he always brought with him some scarce commodity, like a couple of pounds of butter, or good coffee or something else similarly scarce. I have no idea how he got those things - obviously through the black market - but one did not ask those kind of questions. I also don't remember how long he stayed, probably 2 or 3 days. In any case, he never wore out his welcome.

To give you an additional sense of the times, here is the translation of two letters written by my father to the Haas family, who by that time had immigrated to New York. Like the letters above, I didn't know of its existence until it was given to me by Mrs. Haas in September 1991.

August 28, 1937

My dear Haases,

I was ready to loose completely my belief in humanity. My belief in humanity had sunk remarkably during the last year and to doubt the late (poet) Schiller when your well written letter made me realize that true (friendship) still exists. So let me thank you very much for your detailed report, I am especially touched by the warmth with which you want to take the destiny of my Filius (son) in hand. I almost reproach myself that I take your precious time, considering the tempo of life in America, but I am convinced that you like to do it and success would mean satisfaction for you. In sharp contrast to it stands the opinion of my loving affectionate relatives who apparently dismiss the whole matter, based on a casual remark by my sister-in-law Nanny that she is unable to give a guarantee of any sort. I have deducted that my dear sister-in-law Hedwig "has not yet lost her sacro egoismo" it is even stronger, despite the thousands of kilometers transplant.

Concerning Martin's affairs, due to the known bureaucratic handling by the authorities, no decision can be reported. The different questions I have been asked (seem) to give me the satisfactory view that the matter will be worked on. The great difficulty, naturally is the required guarantee which I had assumed to get from Nanny. In this matter, I have been very disappointed, I will (find out) from Stuttgart what the next step is. Possibly I will make personal contact with the proper authorities about the status of negotiations. (One of the options) I must decide is whether to let my boy go to Oregon near the West Coast. I have not decided on it, but if it has to be, so be it.

I am especially glad that all of you are in good health, I can appreciate it even more since, with us, there is lots to tell in that regard. Four weeks ago we have given our good old aunt Babette to the holy ground in Schwanfeld. After a very short illness, uncomplaining, the way she lived, she exchanged her easy life with one even easier. In other matters, fourteen days ago, Tante Carry had to take to her bed due to a thrombosis, which required total rest. The disease took a dangerous turn due to an embolism, only the patient's strong constitution turned the tide. The condition has been stabilized, but the healing process is taxing the patience of the lively aunt. Patient care was given by Dorchen, I, by virtue of my lower rank, waxed floors, made beds and performed similar tasks. These problems had a favorable effect on Josef, he successfully spend all his energy not to burden the household more. By the way, his condition can be described as

stable. Since yesterday Hedwig from Bad Kreuznach is here for a few days. Due to the fact that Sofie is not well, she has to return soon to her own surroundings. With Hedwig came Martin. His "Kur" in Bad Kreuznach did very well, he gained 6 pounds. Also, he grew unbelievably. Only his prevailing paleness stayed the same. Because of Carry's illness, I am kept very busy, none of it very satisfactory. I am in negotiation with a business in Cham in the Bavarian woods, where the world is nailed up with boards about an accounting job, I will be going to Nuremburg (on this matter) next week. Considering the out-of-the-way place, I am not too enthusiastic about the plan but I am very glad that I have the opportunity to produce something. The Frontbund, until now, has not accomplished anything positive. I have finally lost faith in it.

I was very interested in Martha's report on the family Berlin. If you should meet the people sometime, give them my very best regards. Mr. Berlin, at the time, took a stand for us, they are really nice people.

Regarding the promised picture of my beloved Betty, please wait for the next letter. After many unsuccessful trials, I believe I have finally succeeded in discovering one that is adequate. As soon as I get a usable copy I'll send it to you.

What I have to leave out today, for lack of time and concentration, will be made up next time. Waiting still are unbelievably many Rosh Hashono letters, added to constantly by other disturbances which don't let me catch my thoughts.

Let me hear soon pleasant sounds from you, for the New Year, like last year with improvement in the relations with the USA. From me and with contributions from all of us to all of you many regards,

Yours
Seppl

Here are a few comments and explanations to assist in understanding the above letter. 1. The reason Nanny (my mother's step-sister who came to the US prior to WW I) did not put up the guarantee (affidavit) for me was that they just didn't have the resources. They had 7 young children, one marginal income and were really dirt poor in those days, living from hand to mouth. They probably were too proud to admit to that. 2. as I wrote above, Aunt Carry was the matriarch in Estenfeld. Uncle Josef (her husband) had a severe case of Parkinson's disease. I was not aware that she had a thrombosis. They both died in Theresienstadt. Sofie and Hedwig were Carry's sisters. They ran a sanitarium (you would call it a health spa today) for Jewish children in Bad Kreuznach. I remember hating it there. 3. I have no idea who the Berlin family was - never heard of them. 4. I have no idea what the reference about deciding for me to go to Oregon is about. Perhaps someone there was willing to take me in.

Here is the translation of a second letter to the Haases. The originals of both letters are in the back of the binder.

Seppl Birn
Estenfeld

27 September 1937
Eref Simchas Torah

My dear Haases,

I'm putting my fingers to the keys in order to give the tedious Estenfeld holiday spirit, empty of religious services, some meaning. Given the truly good reason for this -- my basically irreligious manner -- I allow myself to assume that the extenuating circumstances will be considered. I think with sadness on the fact that, not that many years ago at this time -- perhaps in the excitement of the ball spirit of the Concordia Simchas Torah festivities -- I was searching for the collar button on my tuxedo, while my wife couldn't get away from the hairdresser! And what has changed since then? It is as if centuries lie between the two.

But now that the time for sentimentalism must be past, I prefer to return to the gray reality: enclosed is the promised photo of our dear departed Betty; you, just as I, will not find it one hundred percent successful, but considering the difficulties that arose in finding a suitable original, it is to be described as a happy coincidence that the reproduction could be made. It is, however, regrettable that I have no picture from the very last part of my dear departed's life which was suited to being phototechnically reproduced; nevertheless I hope that the enclosed photograph will give you pleasure and meet with your favor. It would interest me to hear your judgment about it, as the opinions of my current acquaintances vary greatly.

With that I shift to the news of the day: from the family chronicles it is worth mentioning that, for about 8 days, Aunt Carry has, for the most part, been out of bed, and her attempts to walk gradually have met with success. Naturally she can't yet marshal all her energy, but we are already content that, for the most part she theoretically can again take over running the kitchen and house. For the near future Dorchen must remain to assist her. Friedel is tied to home more than usual and even spent the holidays this year in the close family circle; unfortunately his planned trip has not advanced one step. On the contrary my cousin Sally Lichtenstetter has been requested to meet with the Consul in Stuttgart in the near future and will in any event soon people the U.S.A. As usual I was in Stuttgart at Martin's for my wife's Yahrzeit. To everyone's pleasure the return trip had to be extended to Schweinfurt in order to pay my former boss Ludwig Silberstein the last honors. The day after tomorrow is the meeting with my possible employer-to-be, Mr. Gruenhut from Cham, in Nuremburg, which, under the prevailing circumstances I approach with mixed feelings, but as I would finally like to depart Estenfeld again, I will accept relatively decent conditions. From Erez (Israel) we continually have good news, the closest is Meier Adler and his wife Dorchen who will immigrate to the land of our fathers at the beginning of next year.

Martin's affair is still being processed; however, the difficulty in obtaining a letter of sponsorship greatly hampers (hopes) for quick success. I have had thorough discussions with the responsible authorities in Stuttgart, and I was promised that they would do everything possible on the matter and leave no stone unturned.

Let me hear your good news soon; the most heartfelt greetings from all of us, especially

Your Seppl

Postscript ----- 4 October 1937

As my brother Friedel wanted to add something, he asked me to hold on to the letter for just "one day". Because I'm a good sort -- and despite the known brotherly unreliability -- I agreed.

In the meantime the meeting in Nuremburg took place and was concluded successfully, so at the beginning of December I will start as a bookkeeper for Brothers Gruenhut, bobbin (or drums or electric coils) factory in Chem. The fact that I received the job because of the intercession of the war victims' section of the Front-line Association causes me to revise my previous opinion of the R.J.F. and proclaim the opposite.

From Nuremburg I drove with Sally Lichtenstetter, who happened to be there with his car, over Kleinsteinach-Schweinfurt back to Estenfeld, where my letter of course is still sitting ready to be posted, but without Friedel's addition! My requests to take care of it yielded me only abuse.

By accident I learned that you celebrated a very pleasant family festivity at (the occasion of) Martin's bar mitzvah. Please allow me to congratulate you belatedly most sincerely; it is embarrassing to me that I did not think about it, but at the same time I must accuse you of not having uttered a peep about it. In order to give more weight to these (good) wishes of mine I will permit these same wishes to be made tangible; I will send a small remembrance from my boy to his like-named cousin by the next emissary. So dear Martin, be patient for a while! I will pay Friedel no more heed, both so that my good wishes are not further delayed and in the face of the danger that my little brother will get even more excited than he already is!

He will report to you separately in a few days if it's true (that he intends to write)! --

All my best, yours, Seppl

The translator (I don't remember who it was but she signed it Janice) made the following note: Marty: Anything in parenthesis is my addition to help a sentence make sense or, in the case of the factory, to give options since I am not positive what sort of factory it was.

A few explanations are in order. The Concordia mentioned in the first paragraph was the big annual ball held by the Jewish community in Schweinfurt. It took place on Simchas Tora (Joy of Tora), the holiday which happens two weeks after Yom Kippur. Dorchon refers to Dorchon Adler, Bella and Raya's oldest sister. She, too, settled in Naharia. We did not visit her. She had suffered from severe depression after the death of her parents in Theresienstadt and never recovered. Sally Lichtenstetter referred to in the post script was his cousin, who emigrated to Long Island, changed his name to Sol Light and did very well establishing a scrap metal business. I visited them a couple of times on Long Island in the 40's but lost track of them. The Martin he writes about in the post script is Martin Haas, Ann's older brother who is about 1 1/2

years older than I. I met Martin again at the same time I met Ann and their mother, in Sept. '91. He works for Ann's husband and also lives nearby with his wife.

The Stuttgart Jewish community owned a camp at the edge of town. It was complete with a clubhouse, swimming pool, soccer fields, track etc. I spent many a weekend there, participating in soccer, swimming and track - 100 yard dash mostly.

One Christmas vacation, probably 1937, I had a hernia operation in a hospital in Würzburg, which is a large city about 4 miles from Estenfeld. I was in the hospital for about a week. As you may recall, I had a second hernia operation (the opposite side) at Xmas time in 1988, when I was in the hospital on an outpatient basis less than 9 hours. What a difference 50 years made. I think a weak abdominal wall is genetic, because I remember hearing that several paternal family members have had similar problems.

My father had been suffering for several years from intense headaches. This was eventually diagnosed as a brain tumor. In 1935, he had surgery in Würzburg to remove the tumor, then as now a high risk procedure. The tumor, which turned out to be the size of a pea was removed and the operation, after some post-operative X-ray therapy, was a success. It not only cured his headaches but gave him a topic of conversation for several years thereafter. Since he was required to be awake for the whole 8 hour procedure, he gave a detailed description to anyone who was willing to listen.

The next significant event I remember was the infamous "Kristall Nacht" (night of the broken glass), November 8, 1938. That was the night when every synagogue in Germany was torched, windows of the few remaining Jewish stores were smashed and every adult male Jew was arrested. Some were imprisoned in local jails as was the case with Uncle Justin, and some were taken to concentration camps. There was a knock on the door of the apartment, and a couple of men in Nazi uniform asked for Uncle Justin and told him to come with them. I don't remember if they allowed him to pack anything. My father, who was living and working in Cham near Regensburg (in the above letter he talks about that job as a bookkeeper) was sent to Dachau, the infamous camp near Munich, on Nov. 12th. Of course I didn't know where he was taken to until he told me after his release. He was living alone then without family and was not allowed to write, so I also have no idea how I found out that he had been arrested. Those arrested at that time were kept imprisoned for 3 weeks to 2 months and then released. I remember writing to the Geheime Staats Polizei (GESTAPO-the Secret Police) in Regensburg, telling them that my father should be released as he was a wounded veteran of WW I, and holder of an Iron Cross 2nd Class. I don't know if this helped. He was released on the 26th of November. (This date came from a letter I received from the International Tracing Service, a part of the International Red Cross. I had written them in 1986 to inquire if they had any information on the fate of my father. This was the only information they could find at that time).

Of interest is the e-mail I received from Frau Böhrer in March of 2007 with the following information: My father moved from Estenfeld to Cham December 15, 1937 where he started to work for the Jewish firm Teller and Klein.(*I have no idea what kind of business they were in but will try to find out*). His address in Cham was Waldschmidtstrasse 2. the house of the Jewish family Zimmer where he lived until the beginning of 1940. Afterwards, he was registered at

Brunnendorf 10. He moved to Regensburg on September 24th, 1940, and therefore was not deported from Cham. I learned through Frau Böhrer that he was deported from Regensburg with lots of other people from there to Piarski (a suburb of Lublin in eastern Poland) on April 2, 1942. Piarski was presumably a feeder camp for one of the death camps. I don't know what happened from there, but am trying to find out more at this time. (A friend will be going to the International Tracing Center in Arolsen, Germany, next month (July 2007) to find out what he can now that the documents there have been partially opened for research).

It should be noted that concentration camps in 1938 were - as the name suggests - large prisons, not extermination camps. There were only three or four in Germany at that time. Dachau, Buchenwald and Sachsenhausen come to mind. Inmates were treated harshly, but not purposefully killed except through diseases. The infamous mass death camps (there were 6 - Auschwitz, Treblinka, Chelmno, Belzec, Sobibor and Majdanek) had not been build yet. They were all in Poland, which was not to be occupied by the Germans for another 10 months. The gas chambers in those places were part of Hitler's "Final Solution" agreed to by top Nazis at the Schwansee Conference in January of 1942

Kristallnacht created much despair and of course it was especially difficult for the women and children with all male adults incarcerated. And since all teachers were male and therefore imprisoned, there could be no school. The strain was too much for some. My teacher (Herr David), after his release, turned on the gas jets in his apartment, killing himself, his wife and two young children. We heard of other similar tragedies.

Up until Kristallnacht, Jews who were World War I veterans could work or maintain their business (although they would have gotten very little business from non-Jews). But from then on, things deteriorated rapidly. Much property belonging to the Jewish community as a whole was confiscated, all businesses were closed and Jews could not earn a living anymore except in dealing with other Jews. Also, those lucky enough to be able to emigrate were very limited in what they could take with them. Not much beyond furniture and clothes. No gold, silver, cash or other valuables.

In mid-February 1939, I turned 13 and became Bar Mitzvah, a big celebration even in those troubled times. The religious services took place in the gymnasium of the school, which is where all services were conducted after the synagogue was burned down. The whole Jewish community would turn out, and no doubt as many of my relatives as could travel came to Stuttgart for that occasion.

Shortly after that event, Uncle Justin and family had to move from their large apartment to a small 1 bedroom basement apartment. There was no longer any room for me, and I went to an orphanage in nearby Esslingen (30 minutes or so by suburban train). My memories of life in Esslingen are rather dim. The orphanage was a large mansion on a hilltop at the edge of town surrounded by several acres of fields and fruit orchards. There were probably 25 to 40 boys and a smaller number of girls in residence. We slept in dorms. The orphanage was strictly kosher and orthodox. Everybody went to the synagogue (chapel) 3 times daily for the appropriate services. School took place in the building and the teachers in the multi-class classrooms also

lived in. We had to work in the fields and orchards part time raising vegetables and fruit. I presume this was necessary for survival due to rationing rather than a due to a shortage of funds. There was a small Jewish community in Esslingen, around 100 but I do not recall having any contact with them. I imagine the orphanage, like all Jewish charitable institutions, was well endowed by funds that emigrants had to leave behind. Those of us who had relatives nearby were given passes on Sunday to visit them. For me, it was just a short commuter train trip to Stuttgart. I am sure my father visited me there several times, a long 4-5 hour or longer trip for him.

Thanks to a sister of Tante Frieda living in England, Tante Frieda, Uncle Justin and their son Kurt managed to immigrate to England in the summer of 1939. Their belongings (except what they carried with them) were still sitting in a big crate on the docks of Amsterdam waiting for shipping to England when WWII broke out, Sept 1, 1939. They never saw their things again.

Soon after the start of WWII (September or October 1939) the orphanage was confiscated by the government becoming a German Army hospital. I was sent to another orphanage in Stettin. This is just about as far from Stuttgart as one can get and still stay in Germany at that time. It is a large seaport on the Baltic, now part of Poland (now spelled Szczecin). The orphanage there consisted of a couple of floors in what must have been a Jewish owned apartment building. I remember very little about life there. It was probably a very small institution, maybe 10 boys and 6 girls. We went to school in another part of town, together with the other Jewish kids in Stettin. Stettin had a Jewish population of 2700 in 1933-good sized. Incidentally, I still have the report card (actually a letter) from the headmaster of the school, relating how good a student I was and how they will miss me. That letter is in the safe deposit box. The letter is dated 15 December 1939 and says that I started school there October 27th, 1939, therefore I was in Stettin for less than two month. The only other thing I remember about Stettin was that we had to be careful going back and forth to school to avoid attacks by Hitler Youth kids. We took back streets and alleys and did not go in a group for fear of drawing attention. We could not defend ourselves. I remember getting shot at with a beebee gun or sling shot several times. We also had to be very careful not to have any light leaking from the windows at night, since the city was blacked out due to the war. Fortunately, Stettin was the home of Tante Selma Fischer, my mother's second oldest sister and her husband Theodor. The Fischers have two daughters, my cousin Ellen and Ilse who by that time must have already immigrated to Israel. So I had some family I could relate to, since it was too far for my father to visit me. You met both Ellen (she changed her name to Esther) in Haifa and Ilse in Kfar Schmar Jahu in 1972. Ellen died in 1983, but we did revisit Ilse on our last trip to Israel (October 1991) and I am still in touch with her and her husband Schmuel (Rosenthal). They now live in Tel Aviv.

It was while I was in Stettin that I got the notice that my visa to the U.S. came through. The application was probably made some three or four years previous (U.S. immigration quotas limited the number of immigrants from Germany. I was shocked by the low numbers when I looked up the immigration to the U.S. from Germany during that time. In 1935, it was 5201, in 1936 - 6,346, in 1937 - 10,895, in 1938 - 17,199, in 1939 - 33,515 and in 1940 - 21,520. After June 1940, when Italy got into the war, the figures were in the low hundreds because the only way to get out of Germany then was through Spain or Portugal. The U.S. consulate I had to go to was in Stuttgart, so after a couple of months in Stettin, I returned to Stuttgart where I met my

father and got my papers for emigrating to the U.S. I don't remember where I stayed. (Uncle Justin and Tante Frieda were already in England by that time). There was probably some sort of hostel run by the Jewish community for the Jews who came to Stuttgart for dealing with the American consulate. I still have the Immigration ID card (it is green - hence the term "Green Card"). My "Quota Immigration Visa # "is 16845. In other words, I was part of the German quota, under the U.S. Quota law. I have learned recently the significance of the number. It represents the number of visas issued by the American consulate in Stuttgart (I don't know for what period) and is not related to the German immigrant quota.

By this time, one had to get permission of everything one took out of the country, and of course removal of valuables (gold, silver, art etc.) was very much restricted. I still have the itemized list of the things I came out with, complete with cross-outs (items I had on the list which were denied) and the official approval stamp. It's not a very long list, considering these would be all my worldly goods to start life anew in America. Here is a translation of the list:

Removal Permit

Check-through Packages

No.	Section	Quantity	Description	Cost	Year	Remarks
						Purchased
1	I	1	Pillow	15.--	1927	
2		4	Pillowcases	9.--	1927	
3		6	Hand towels	7.20	1929	
4		1	Down quilt	60.00	1924	
5		6	Bed sheets	24.--	1926	
6		2	Quilt covers	15.--	1923	
7		1	Bathrobe	9.--	1930	altered
8		2	Sport jackets	3.--	1932	
9		2	Sport pants	2.50	1932	
10		4	Relig .Books	10.--	1925/26	
11		1	Toilet Arti- cles,	15.--	1927/28	
12		1	Boys Suit	27.--	1937	
13		1	Overcoat	31.--	1936	
14		1	Pants	8.--	1938	
15		2	Sweaters	9.--	1939	
16		2pair	Shoes	15.--	1937/1938	
17		1pair	Athletic shoes	3.--	1938	
18		1	Pajamas	6.50	1937	present
19		4	Sport shirt	16.--	1938	
20		5	Under shorts	17.50	1937	
21		4	Boxer shorts	5.--	1938	
22		12	Handkerchiefs	4.80	1937	

23		7pair	Boys stockings	9.--	1937/39	
24		1	Hat	2.10	1939	
25		2	Jackets	15.00	1939	present
26		3	Nightshirts	10.50	1937/38	
27	III	1	Travel alarm	12.--	1939	confirmation present
28		1	Photo album	2.--	1939	confirmation present
29		1	Camera	50.00	1939	confirmation present
30		misc.	Shoeshine brushes	2.--	1939	
31		1	English dictionary	5.95	1939	present
32		1	German dictionary	5.--	1939	present
33		2	Suitcases	32.50	1938/39	

Hand (Carry-on) Package

1	2	Knives, Silver				
2	2	Forks, Silver	25.--	1890		
3	2	Soup spoons				
4	2	Coffee spoons				
5	1	Egg cup, Silver				
6	1	Egg spoon, Silver	8.--	1926	Present Under	
			40 grams			
7	3	Hand towels	3.60	1929		
8	1	Travel blanket	15.--	1926		
9	1	Boys suit	45.00	1938		
10	2	Boys pants	15.--	1937		
11	1pr	Shoes	9.--	1938		
12	4	Neckties	10.--	1937	present	
13	2	Pajamas	12.--	1938		
14	3	Sport shirts	12.--	1938		
15	2	Shorts	7.--	1937		
16	10	Handkerchiefs	3.60	1938		
17	5 pr	Stockings	6.--	1937/38		
18	1	Sweater	4.50	1938		
19	1 pr	Slippers	2.--	1939		
20	1	Over shirt	6.50	1939		
21	1	Ski pants	11.--	1939	present	
22	misc	.Toilet articles	5.--	1939		
23	1	Travel case	15.--	1939		

24	1	Wristwatch	14.50	1937
25	1	Fountain pen	12.50	1936
26	1	Mechanical pencil	3.50	1937
27	1	4-color pencil	3.50	1939
28	1	Student briefcase	14.--	1939
29	1	Suitcase	18.--	1938

That was it. The complete list of things I left Germany with. (The notation "present" means that these items were given to me as presents at various times).

The bedding items were first disallowed, the theory being that a young boy traveling alone does not need these items. My father appealed, convincing the officials that a 13 year old does need these even in America. The camera, a not especially expensive Bar Mitzva present, was disallowed.

The notation by the silver items were that these items weight less than 40 grams (1.4 ounces), the maximum amount of silver one could take out.

When I first went camping in the early 50s, the down feathers from the quilt (item 4 in the above list) ended up in a sleeping bag I had made. That down bag was eventually cut down to the bag liner that we still have as part of our camping gear. So it is very likely that some of the feathers in that liner go back to 1924. The only other items I still have are my photo album (which I consider one of my most precious possessions), the silver egg cup and spoon (which I use every Tuesday for eating a soft boiled egg) and two silver soup spoons (we use almost daily as a serving spoons) which were probably the remainder of my parents silver service. I believe my father told me that the egg cup and spoon in its case was a birth present from my paternal grandfather, but I'm not sure, nor am I aware of any family or religious tradition of the giving of such a present. The date listed (1926) would tend to verify my memory. I don't know what happened to the rest of the silverware I brought over. It was intended as a present for the Blumbergs, and one of them may have it. I hope so and will inquire some time if I think of it.

Fortunately all the papers, tickets and permits for emigrating came together without much of a problem, so I was able to leave without any hassles.

I left Stuttgart on Jan. 19, 1940, taking the train to Genoa, Italy, where I was to board the Italia Lines ship CONTE DI SAVOIA. My father went with me on the train as far as Munich, where we said good-bye for what would be the last time. I don't remember if I was by myself at that time or with other children or chaperoned by any adult. I do remember the scary experience of interrogation by German officials at the German-Italian border. They inquired about contraband but did not actually search me or my two suitcases. The stamp in my passport is marked "German Border Police Post, Brenner Pass Jan. 21st, 1940". In Genoa, I stayed overnight at an Italian-Jewish orphanage and the following day boarded the ship. The Italian exit stamp in the passport is dated 23rd Jan. 1940. There were 11 other children from different parts of Germany plus an adult chaperone as part of our group. This information is from an article in the New York Times of Feb. 2, 1940 (I send you a copy of that) not my memory. I do remember that I was the oldest - just short of my 14th birthday. The CONTE DI SAVOYA was a large ship, 48,502 tons. She was 815 ft. long and had room for 2200 passengers -500 in first class, 366 in second class, 412 tourist class and 922 in third class. Of course we were in third class. I was told

by a shipmate recently that there were four of us in a small cabin in two double-decker bunks. I remember that it didn't take some of us kids long to find our way to the first class lounges. We just observed the stewards from a discreet distance to find the passageways and doors that they took. It also didn't take long to learn a lesson in economics. Orange juice, a real luxury item for us, cost 10 cent a glass in third class, 15 cent in second class and 25 cent in first class. We learned quickly that the portions were the same, only the glasses and napkins were fancier. Incidentally, my total wealth, not counting my belongings, consisted of \$4.50, all the money I could take out of Germany. I think I landed in New York with about \$3.50, the difference having been spent mostly on orange juice and chocolate candy. On one of my forays into first class, I was invited to play ping pong by a boy a couple of years older than I who wore a turban and told me he was from India. I discovered after reading the paper in New York that it was the film star Sabu, also known as the "Elephant Boy" because of the roles he played. He was on his way to Hollywood, where he made a number of movies as a teen-ager as well as making a comeback when he was in the mid-thirties. He died of a heart-attack at age 39 in California. Incidentally, the New York Times issue of Feb. 2, 1940 also listed other famous people who were aboard, including our group.

I landed in New York on Feb. 1, 1940 and was met by Uncle Max, cousin Lotte and Ann Haas, my friend from Schweinfurt and then Lotte's girlfriend in New York. One of my first impressions was of Ann chewing bubble gum and her ability to blow large bubbles. I had never seen chewing gum before and blowing of a bubble blew my mind. Also I experienced my first subway ride and was amazed by the many blacks I saw. The handful of blacks I had seen in Germany were with the circus when it came to town.

I stayed with the Blumenthals a few days in their Brooklyn apartment at 170 Parkside Ave. It was a third floor walkup, and you could get within a two blocks by the taking the Brighton Beach Local on the BMT, getting off at the Parkside Ave. station. While there, I saw and ate my first grapefruit, cold cereal, "bubble" bread, chewing gum and milkshake and was dazzled by supermarkets, drug stores, soda fountains, the subway, Macy's, escalators and many other new and wonderful things.

Then one of the Blumbergs (I don't remember who but Bill said it was he) came and took me by train to what would be my new permanent home with them in Philadelphia. Tante Nanny Blumberg was my mother's step-sister from Grandfather Louis's first marriage. She came to the US in 1905 at age 25, married almost immediately and had never been back to Germany since then.

In retrospect, living with the Blumbergs must have been quite a cultural shock. The household consisted of Uncle Morris, Tante Nanny, and their 7 children ranging in age from 34 to 18. Milton was the oldest, Lillian the youngest with Becky (her name was Rebecca but later on she wanted to be known as Ruth), Helen, Morton, Betty (Bert) and Bill in between. The house was a typical Philadelphia row house, with a living room, dining room and kitchen downstairs and 3 small bedrooms and a bathroom upstairs. The basement consisted of the furnace room, a big coal bin and storage room. The bathroom was so small that it had no room for a sink, only a tub and toilet. One leaned over the bathtub to wash. There were two double beds in the girl's bedroom, a double bed, a single bed and a folding cot on which I slept in the boy's bedroom. I have no

idea how four people got their clothing into one small closet. Money and jobs was still scarce then. Uncle Morris had a bread delivery route, and he had Bill helping him. They used a panel truck for that. Milton was a foreman at Blumenthal Brothers, a candy factory which manufactured a candy with national distribution (I don't remember the name). He was probably making the most money in the family. Lillian was a senior in high school. She, Bill, Morton and Helen finished high school. The others had to go to work before graduating. Helen was working as a beautician. I was very impressed with Milton because he not only had a large model airplane with a real gasoline engine, he also had a tattoo with his social security number on his biceps, both things I had never seen before. Uncle Morris and Tante Nanny were fluent in German and spoke that to me at first, but the others knew very little German. So it took several months before the question to Milton about the significance of the number meant anything to me. Uncle Morris was orthodox, therefore Tante Nanny kept a kosher house. However none of the cousins ever went to synagogue that I recall. However, Bill told me recently that the three boys were Bar Mitzvah (not surprising considering that Uncle Morris was an orthodox Jew)..

It was only a day or two after arriving in Philadelphia that I started in public school, John Welsh Elementary, about 10 blocks away. Like Meryl's understanding of German in Starnberg, my understanding of English was minimal despite 3 years of study. Therefore I was first put into 5th grade. However it didn't take very long, perhaps 2 month, before my English was good enough to be put into the sixth grade, after another month in the 7th grade and finally after a semester or two in the 8th. This put me only 1 year behind where I should have been based on my age and when I started school. I still have the report card from the 8th grade.

Living at the Blumbergs was probably the most difficult time in my entire life. Besides being a teenager with its associated normal problems, my upbringing as an only child in an upper middle class family was ill preparation for living in a foreign country, a small house, surrounded by 9 adults, no privacy and probably feeling very isolated. The mere fact that the Blumbergs took me in, considering their own circumstances, showed where their heart was. But that, of course, was not something I gave much thought to at that time. Uncle Morris, who was a Litvak (a Jew from Lithuania) let me know more than once his opinion of German Jews (his wife not withstanding) which was anything but complimentary. And I might add with good reason. German Jews had a great disdain for and superiority complex over Eastern European Jews (for all the good that did them in the end). He subscribed to the "TAG" (the Day) a Yiddish daily newspaper, and I learned to read it a little, which enhanced my stature a bit. Of course there was no arguing about the content. If it was in the TAG, it was gospel.

The Blumbergs children all had to earn their own spending money (there was no such thing as allowance), and I was no exception. So it didn't take long before I learned about the world of business. My very first exposure to the market place was selling imitation carnations (made by one of the cousins) on Mother's Day. After that, I became a soft pretzel seller. Every Saturday morning, I would go to the pretzel bakery, buy at two for a penny as many pretzels as I thought I could sell and sell them in front of the neighborhood movie at a penny a piece. In those days, the movies had not discovered popcorn, pretzels (with or without mustard) was what one took to the movies. I probably earned 25 or 30 cents a week. The pretzels were sold from a picnic basket covered with a clean dish towel, and the only other thing you needed was a jar of mustard with a paddle similar to a paint mixer and some small paper bags, which I bought from the local

supermarket. Some of my classmates in school earned their spending money by shining shoes, but I was told in no uncertain terms that shining shoes is not something Jewish boys did.

I saved enough money that year (probably \$3-\$4) to buy a used bicycle, a balloon-tired Columbia. Incidentally, the frame of that bike broke while being ridden the day before I went into the service four years later, and I just abandoned it on some street in Philadelphia. My first job for wages was at a small grocery store whose owner was a friend of the Blumbergs. I did everything from waiting on trade to unloading merchandise, delivering orders and sweeping the store and sidewalk.

I have no idea how long I kept getting letters and writing letters to my father. Probably nothing after June 1940, when Italy entered the war and there was no longer any direct mail service between Germany and the US. I do not have a single one from that period.

As to the fate of my father, sometime after the end of the war, I got a phone call. I don't know when or from whom or how he found me. The man said he was in Auschwitz with my father and that he died there. I didn't have the presence of mind at that time to get more information. I have made inquiries through the International Tracing Service of the International Red Cross. The letter from them stated that "Birn, Sali, born in Estenfeld on 21.7.1890, Last place of residence: Estenfeld No. 29, was deported to Ghetto Theresienstadt or Concentration Camp Auschwitz in 1942 (day and month not indicated)". It further stated that "In the incomplete original records which are available here of Concentration Camp Auschwitz or of Ghetto Theresienstadt, the name of your father could not be ascertained." Since then, I received the following e-mail from Frau Elisabeth Böhrer on May 8th, 2007: "He was deported with a lot of other people on April 2, 1942 to Piaski (it is near Lublin in Poland)." I found out that Piaski is a section of Lublin (probably where its ghetto was) and was a "feeder" camp for Auschwitz. Whether he died in Piaski or was shipped to Auschwitz before being killed I do not know and may never know. Some record may still show up in the future, since the Tracing Service got a lot more records from the Russians when the Soviet Union collapsed (the Russians liberated Auschwitz) and it will take the Tracing Service's small staff a long time to translate and sort the information. But I don't have much hope.

I came to the US under the auspices of the German Jewish Children's Aid Society, whose representative met the ship in New York. It was the major institution for settling children who came without parents and had no relatives to go to. In Philadelphia, I was a ward of the Association for Jewish Children. And fortunately, I remained under their care until age 18 & I went into the Navy. I am not sure what the mechanism was, but having a social worker visit me occasionally gave me a chance to explain my side of the many conflicts that arouse while living at the Blumbergs. The Association also bought me clothing, took care of my medical and dental needs, and paid a small amount toward my food costs (this only after Tante Nanny found out I had an appetite like 3 elephants). They also saw to it that I got a chance to go to special events sponsored by various organizations for underprivileged children. For example, during the Summer of 1940, I had the opportunity to go to a two week summer camp in the Poconos. The camp was sponsored by the local Elks. While I remember nothing about life at the camp (it was probably typical of children's camps) I remember being very proud to win the award for the biggest eater - it was no contest, I was the runaway winner. The award was a small shovel which

I kept on my key ring for a long time and showed off at every opportunity to the embarrassment of the adults.

Ellis Gimbel, head of the Philadelphia branch of Gimbel Brothers department store, always bought out an entire matinee performance of the Ringling Brothers circus when it came to town, to be filled by underprivileged kids from orphanages and social agencies. Not only was I able to get out of school to go to the performance, every kid got a big bag full of candy, popcorn and a soft drink.

The Association had a couple of families in Atlantic City that took in children for some R & R during the summer. So during the summer of '41, my social worker saw to it that I got a chance to go for a week or two, I don't remember how long. But I do remember having a wonderful time exploring the town with several other kids my age. In those days, there was the Steel Pier, the Heinz Pier and of course the long boardwalk and sandy beach. The trip back to Philly was especially memorable because I rode the whole way in the rumble seat of a Model 'A' Ford. What a thrill.

I also visited Uncle Max in Brooklyn for a week or two and spent several days all by myself at the 1940 New York World's Fair. This was the introduction of fluorescent lights, television, and all kinds of new concepts in transportation, manufacturing, science etc. And I was like Alice in Wonderland.

From the summer of 1940 on, the economy started getting better. Morton got a job at the shipyard. Helen put two of her sisters (Ruth and Lillian) through beauty school and they opened up a beauty shop. Bill went into the Army.

Prior to graduating from elementary school in the summer of 1941 I applied and got accepted at the Mastbaum Vocational School, one of three vocational schools in Philadelphia. Entrance to the school was very competitive; one had to pass a series of stringent academic as well as aptitude tests. So getting accepted was a real personal triumph. In 9th grade, they had something called "Trade Exploratory". You took classes in woodworking, auto mechanics, textile, electricity and machine shop in addition to the regular academic subjects in order to learn what you are best at. The school day was much longer than the regular academic Jr. High School. It was there that I discovered my interest in and talent for things electrical.

About that time a potentially tragic event turned out serendipitous. That event was leaving the Blumberg household and going to live with the Marx family.

In the early part of 1942, all the Blumberg boys were in the military. Helen, who had gotten married previously, was expecting her first child. Since her husband Morris also had been drafted, she moved back into the Blumberg house taking the 2nd bedroom, so there was no longer room for me. One of my options was to live in the orphanage run by the Association for Jewish Children in Philadelphia, the other was to find a family to live with. My social worker found such a family in the Marxes who ran a boarding house in Northeast Philadelphia, had room for me and I guess both they and I were willing to take a chance to see if my living there would work out. It did.

I did a little bit of research into the records of the Association for Jewish Children in a trip to Philadelphia in June 2001 and came across the following interesting data. On March 1, 1942, there were 41 German Jewish children under the care of the German Jewish Children's Aid living in Philadelphia. This was the umbrella organization in New York, but the Association for Jewish Children in Philadelphia provided the actual care. Their staff included 2 supervisors, 6 case workers and one home finder. I think, they also looked after the 228 American born children in their care. The rate of pay to foster homes was as follows: In 1940-\$21.00/mo; 1941-\$22.00/mo; 1942-\$24.00/mo; 1943-\$27.00/mo which went up to \$30.00/mo. for children age 12 or older; in 1946, it was \$40.00/mo.

The Marx family consisted of Grandma Marx, a widow in her early 70's, her daughter Meta, probably in her mid forties, widowed and divorced from her second husband, and Emil, Meta's only child who was my age. They owned a large 3-story house with 6 bedrooms, two baths and an enclosed porch at about 19th & Erie Avenue. I think they had four boarders, unmarried men in their 30s (all Jewish) when I first moved there. Grandma Marx (nobody called her anything else) ran the household and did all the cooking. Meta was the head cashier for a nearby supermarket, part of a local chain. Initially, I slept on a couch in the enclosed porch. But pretty soon, Emil and I shared a bedroom. All the Marxes and I hit it off from the start. I became part of the family, Emil became the brother I never had and visa versa. Their friends and relatives became mine. Of course, my room and board was paid for by the association (until I went in the service) but with my enormous appetite, I'm sure the Marxes didn't make much money on me. I remember playing lots of gin rummy and pinochle with the other boarders. After Grandma died, (1944?) Meta sold the house, moved to a smaller house in a West Oaklane and gave up the boarders except for me. I stayed with her until I got married in 1956, except for the time I was away in the Navy and in college.

While Emil and I were very different we were the best of friends. He was a 'spoiled' only child with a grandmother who indulged his every wish, a mediocre scholar and low achiever while I was not satisfied with anything except straight A's in school and had to earn all my spending money. I don't ever remember a serious falling out with him, and we double dated frequently. I don't remember what his disability was that prevented him from getting accepted into the military during WW II.

I continued going to Mastbaum Vocational School after moving to the Marxes, despite it being much further from home. It took me probably an hour by trolley, longer by bike which I rode frequently. School consisted of 4 hours of practical electrical studies (house wiring, motor repair, industrial electronics) in the morning, followed by 3 or 4 hours of the usual academics (English, math, social studies, gym etc.). This made for a long day, but I loved it and usually was promoted No.1 in my class with straight A's except for that B or C in gym.

Most of my teachers were very supportive. Through the efforts of the vice-principal I received a White-Williams scholarship. It consists of a stipend of several dollars a week, to be used for school supplies, car fare, lunch etc. Its idea was to enable a person with good grades but who might otherwise drop out because of financial problems to remain in school. It is one of the

oldest scholarship funds in the U.S., founded in 1860. It is unique to the Philadelphia school system (both public and parochial school students are eligible) and is still operating today. I contribute every year. Today, over 90% of White-Williams scholars go on to college.

I also tried out for the soccer team, but never made it into the varsity, having to content myself with being on the 2nd team or occasionally substituting. Athletics, except for biking, wasn't my thing.

Standards were very high at Mastbaum and the tolerance for discipline problems was zero. If you had poor grades or did not follow the rules, you were quickly kicked out, there being three students on the waiting list ready to take your place and every student knew that. Because of the curriculum and high standards, Mastbaum graduates were eagerly sought out by businesses and industry. There were very few after-school friendships made because we lived all over the city and had such long school days and commuting times. Also, many of us had jobs on Saturdays. While I was going there, the school was upgraded to a "Vocational Technical High School". This meant that the academic courses were upgraded so that they became eligible for college credit. This was a help to me later when I got ready to go to college and needed the credits.

The list of jobs as a teenager was long but interesting. I already mentioned selling pretzels. I also had a paper route for a time (at that time in Philadelphia nearly everybody read the Evening Bulletin), cleaned windows for houses in the neighborhood and on Sundays washed and waxed the floor at Cousin Helen's beauty shop. In fact it was there, while listening to the radio that I heard the announcement about Pearl Harbor being bombed. Chester, Cousin Lillian's boyfriend at the time (and later her husband) caddied at a golf course and introduced me to that. It was something you could do by merely showing up at a golf course. For a while I was a regular Saturday and Sunday caddie at the Philmont Country Club which was the Jewish club located about 30 minutes by suburban train from the city. Carts had not yet been invented and every golfer at Philmont had to have a caddie. The players were generally quite generous, especially to very competent caddies which I tried to be. I remember getting from \$2.00 to \$2.50 (the fee was \$1.50, the rest was a tip) for 18 holes double (carrying 2 bags for 2 players), and made twice as much if I got a chance to do two rounds. That was big money then. I was known as Frenchy. When one of the other caddies asked me where I was from - because of my still pretty strong accent- I told them I was from France. It was not very cool to be German since we were at war with that country. Fortunately, they didn't know the difference between a German and French accent. I remember around Xmas time being invited to a party given for the regular caddies at the club, and getting a turkey dinner, a turkey to take home to the family and a wool jacket - the latter courtesy of "Uncle Ellis" Gimbel, head of Gimbel Bros. department store in Philly, and a founding member of the club. It used to be a special privilege to caddie for Uncle Ellis. He was an old man then, probably in his early 70's. He played 9 holes of golf occasionally, treated his caddie with great respect and tipped \$5.00, a real fortune.

Another early job lasting for a couple of months was in a furniture factory. I nailed corner blocks on upholstered chair and sofa frames as they came down an assembly line (it must have been awfully cheap furniture if they used nails). I also had to help unload freight cars full of hardwood boards, something I came to dread because it was just plain hard work.

A little after that, again for a couple of months, I held two jobs at a Birdseye Frozen Foods storage warehouse on the South Philadelphia waterfront. During the week for two or three hours after school, I glued together cardboard boxes which were used for shipping the products. On Saturdays, I worked inside the cold storage locker filling customer's orders. Since the temperature inside the locker was below freezing, we were issued and wore heavy clothing and were allowed to take frequent breaks. The pay was very lucrative, something like 45 or 50 cents per hour (big money in those days). I saved enough on that job to buy myself a typewriter, which was around \$45. I had that machine until I traded it in for a more deluxe model during my sophomore year in college.

I got the two last mentioned jobs through the school's employment bureau. With so many of the men in the military, there was no shortage of jobs.

Soon after moving to the Marxes, through Meta's influence I got a job as a bag boy at the supermarket where she worked. Eventually, I worked my way up to the produce department, where I trimmed vegetables and filled the displays. These were highly desirable jobs. I believe I worked there until I went into the service in 1944.

Because I was officially an "enemy alien" (after all, I did have a German passport) I could not enlist in the service like many of my contemporaries but had to wait till I got drafted. This happened in June of 1944, soon after I turned 18. I had just finished my junior year at Mastbaum. I had time to take a short vacation, which I spend visiting Uncle Justin and Aunt Frieda, living at that time in New Haven, and Uncle Max and Aunt Hedwig in Brooklyn. They got together to buy me a wrist watch. It must have been a good one, because I still have the watch and it still runs. It is engraved on the back with the date "13 June 1944", my induction date.

At the time of my induction, the Navy needed skilled electricians. And thanks to my vocational training in that field, I ended up in the Navy. For my 4 weeks of boot camp, I was send to the Bainbridge Naval Training Center not too far from Baltimore, Md.

During boot training, they give you a series of tests to determine your future assignment. I was told that I had an almost perfect score on the electrical test (not surprising to me, considering my schooling). On the strength of that, after a short leave, I was send to Electricians Mate School. I think this was for 6-8 weeks, and was also at Bainbridge.

Incidentally, while in boot training, I discovered religion. Friday evening and Saturday morning was the time spent in scrubbing and polishing our barracks to the fair-thee-well for the Saturday afternoon inspection. It was also the time of Jewish religious services at the base chapel. Given these choices, it doesn't take a genius to decide what to do. I believe some of my non-Jewish fellow trainees were seriously considering converting to Judaism.

Shortly before finishing training, I was notified that my application for citizenship, which was automatically filed when I was sworn into the Navy, came through. Ordinarily, you had to be in the country for at least 5 years before you could even apply, but of course these rules were waived. Being in the service speeded the process up, taking instead 5 month. I got a special 12

hour pass (while in training you don't usually get any passes during the week) to go to Baltimore and was sworn in by a Federal District Judge in Baltimore on the 13th of November 1944. An amusing incident happened during the ceremonies. Here I was in my navy dress blues, standing in front of the judge, and he said with a smile on his face "It may be a foolish question but I must ask you this: Are you willing to fight for your country?" I smiled back and said "Yes, Sir" It was a memorable day.

After that, I was assigned to a ship, and became a crew member of LSM (which stands for Landing Ship, Medium) 553. We were part of what was known as the Amphibs (The Navy's amphibious fleet). While our ship was being build, we trained together as a crew at the Amphibious Training Center at Little Creek, VA. a few miles from Norfolk. We (50 men and 5 officers) ate together, marched together, slept in the same barracks and studied the unique systems of our future ship. We were pretty well a melting pot of the East coast, both South and North. I think we only had one career sailor, our Chief Boatswains Mate who was probably in his early 30's and had been in the Navy for 10 years. From the look on the picture in my album, the average age was probably 19. There was one black in the crew, he was the steward whose job it was to take care of the officers quarters. Integration was still a number of years away. Our skipper, a 1st Lieutenant, was a former All-American football player (I don't remember which school) who had also played for the pros (the NY Giants, I think). He was obviously nobody to be trifled with. But he was smart, very fair and respected by everyone. That training took about 4 weeks. I must have done okay, because during the graduation exercises, I was selected by the skipper as the outstanding member of the engineering gang. I was also selected to be the leading electrician, responsible for everything electrical on the ship and assigning and supervising the duties of 3 other electricians mates. Pretty heady stuff for an 18 year old just 4 years off the boat. By the time training was done, our ship which was being built in Charlestown, SC was ready for its shakedown cruise. I don't remember anything about the trip to Charlestown except that it was by train. Probably the usual troop transport. The shakedown cruise was fun. We checked out all the equipment under various conditions also did practice landings on various beaches. Then it was back into the shipyard to get the things fixed that needing fixing and take on supplies for our mission.

Some time during that period, I was send to the Brooklyn Navy Yard to learn about the care and feeding of the ship's gyro compass, for which I was responsible. It was made by Sperry, and their training school was at the Brooklyn Navy Yard. The training lasted only a couple of weeks, but during that time, I took full advantage of the considerable hospitality New York offered to servicemen. Since I had every evening and the weekend free, I saw lots of plays (for free), went to the Stagedoor Canteen etc.

By this time, the war in Europe was pretty well over, no more landings using landing ships were required. The trip to the Pacific meant going through the Panama Canal, which would have been a very long journey of a ship going about 12 knots full speed. Likewise the war in the Pacific was winding down. We ended up doing a number of training cruises, one of which was up the Mississippi as far as Memphis, TN. with a stop-over in New Orleans, getting a couple of days of liberty there.(my next visit to that city wasn't until April 1998). At the end of the war we took the ship to Green Cove Springs for mothballing. Green Cove Springs is on the St. John River near Jacksonville, FL. I must have spent several months there, because I helped

decommission 3 or 4 ships. Mothballing consisted of installing air dehumidifiers, draining all fluids from pipes and sealing up all exterior openings to minimize potential deterioration. Several hundred ships were all tied together in the river. I guess eventually, maybe after ten years or longer, they were scrapped.

I got my honorable discharge June 1946 and went back to Philadelphia to live with the Marxes. The GI Bill made it possible for me to think about going to college. I had also been urged to get an engineering degree by my engineering officer aboard ship, who graduated in engineering from Purdue and took an interest in me. However, since I was still one year away from a high school diploma, the first thing I had to do was take care of that matter. Temple University had set up an accredited high school subsidiary for just that purpose. Four or five months of accelerated study got me an academic high school diploma. The academic credits I received from Temple U. High School plus the credit I got for my work as a navy electrician also got me a vocational technical diploma from Mastbaum. I still knew enough German at that time to get the required foreign language credits by passing an exam. So by January of 1947, I had enough of the right kind of academic credits to qualify for admission to most engineering schools. I still have both the high school diploma from Temple U. High School and a vocational school diploma from Mastbaum among my souvenirs.

The next step was to apply to various universities I was interested in. For reasons I don't remember, I applied to a number of mid-West universities rather than ones close to home. Their tuition was probably cheaper and I wanted to experience some other part of the US. At any rate, I was accepted by the U. of Wyoming, U. of Denver, U. of New Mexico, and a couple of others.

The time between high school graduation and start of college were busy with earning as much money as possible. I got a job as an electrician's helper working for a contractor who specialized in doing the wiring on gas stations being modernized. Before work, I delivered the morning paper at 2601 Parkway, a large upscale apartment complex. And on Saturday, I was a soda dispenser at a drug store near the U. of Pennsylvania.

A week prior to the start of the 1947 academic year, I packed my belongings and got on the train for Wyoming and Colorado. I looked around both Cheyenne and Denver for a day, decided that I felt most comfortable and had the best job opportunities in Denver and matriculated at the U. of Denver. The date of my matriculation, per the official transcript, was May 29, 1947.

I quickly found a room to rent through the university housing office. At that time, DU did not have any dormitories for single men or women, only a very limited amount of housing for married students.

It also didn't take me long to find part-time employment compatible with my school and study schedule. That consisted of 2 delivery routes of the Denver morning paper, the Rocky Mountain News. Those were big routes, something like a total of 250-300 papers and quite profitable. I convinced the newspaper circulation manager into giving me first one big route and then a second based on my previous newspaper delivery experience, my being an adult and my motivation. The routes were in my neighborhood, I delivered them on a heavy-duty bicycle. I was awakened at 5:30 in the morning by the man who dropped off the papers on the porch of the

house (I rigged a buzzer system to my room) and was done around 7:30, when I headed for school.

I also would occasionally caddy at the Denver Country Club. For a stretch of about 6 months, I worked as a bicycle mechanic on Saturdays. It was while working there that I got my Pennsylvania veteran's bonus (almost every state awarded its veterans a bonus of 100-300 dollars). Mine was about \$125 and I used most of it to buy (at wholesale) a Schwinn Paramount racing bike. It was at that time the finest bike made, custom build to my specifications. This started my serious bike racing and touring. Although my career as a racer was short lived (I didn't do any more racing after I left Colorado), that bike provided me with exercise and recreation for several years after I returned to Philadelphia.

Many of my classmates and I joined the Colorado Air National Guard which required training for one evening a week and one Sunday a month. Of course we did it strictly for the money. Since we were all WWII veterans and needed very little training, we spent most of our time doing what we would have done at home without pay - our homework. Our commanding officer was most understanding. On Sundays, we flew enough to qualify for flight pay. Oh, yes, we also had to put in 2 weeks during the Summer. One year we went to some Air Force base in the Detroit area. I don't remember where we went for the other year. I was a sergeant, the equivalent to my former Navy rank.

Thanks to my various jobs, the money from the GI Bill and the National Guard, I could live reasonably comfortable and save some money besides.

Newspaper delivery is a seven day a week job, and with 250-300 papers to deliver, it was all but impossible to find a substitute. Therefore my travel was restricted to one day affairs. I did manage a trip home one time during the three years of college. This came about when I learned that a crew in one of the Air Force reserve units was going to fly on a training mission from Denver to Fort Dix, NJ. and back, with a day or two layover at Fort Dix. It was to be during the normal 2-week break between semesters and they were willing to take me along for the ride. The round trip took 4 days and it gave me one overnight in Philadelphia. The airplane was a twin-engine bombardier trainer (a Beechcraft). I sat in the Plexiglas nose in the bombardiers normal position most of the trip, so I had a wonderful view of the terrain.

The fact that I didn't get done with my studies till very late at night and having to get up very early in the morning didn't seem to affect me any - I was in great physical condition. I guess this was the start of a lifetime habit of going to bed late and getting up early.

Because of the demand, the university offered a full complement of courses during the Summer semester. Most of my classmates and I took advantage of that, completing the traditional four year (12 semester) curriculum in 3 years. I graduating in August 1950 with a BS in Electrical Engineering with the power (as distinguished from the electronics) option. My grades were pretty good, in the upper quartile, and I was elected to the mathematics honorary, Pi Delta Theta.

While there was no family or friends at the graduation August 25th 1950, I remember getting a number of nice presents from the family and especially from the Marxes. The graduation speaker was the future president of the US and at that time President of Columbia University, Dwight D. Eisenhower. He also got the usual honorary doctorate.

Despite the demanding school and work schedule, I found time for a reasonable social life. I not only learned square and folk dancing, but also ended up doing some calling for the "Dudes and Dames" the university's square dance club. Most of the girls I dated were fellow club members. I belonged to Hillel and was active in the Independent Association, which was the counterbalance to the university's fraternities. There was a Jewish fraternity on campus, but I didn't have the time, interest or money to join. There was also a Jewish sorority, but don't recall dating any of those girls. I was also a founding member and first president of the "Rocky Mountain Wheelmen" a bicycle touring group not affiliated with the university.

Just prior to my last semester, I resigned from the National Guard in order have more time for fun and not having to mess with Summer Camp and Sundays of training. This proved to be a most fortunate decision. In June of 1950, the Korean War started and my former unit was called up - without me. My resignation had been accepted and became official just about a week before the start of the war. After the start, there was no resigning, you were frozen in. The unit spent over two years in Korea, while I was earning good money at my first job as an engineer. (I found out much later that none of my classmates who went to Korea were hurt while there). But more about that later.

During that last semester, I took up tennis. One of the fellow students and a frequent partner was a bus-ed student named Vince Borrilla. At that time, he was an All-American basketball player for DU (a first for the university). He continued to make quite a name for himself playing with and coaching the NY Knickerbockers for many years. I don't know why he was willing to play with me, because he was so much better and more competitive. He beat me consistently but caused my game to improve quite a bit.

Engineering jobs at graduation time were scarce in the Denver area, so I decided to return to Philadelphia (the Korean War job boom would not start for several months). I went there by a roundabout way - via San Francisco, to take advantage of an invitation from the Weisses, with whom I had maintained correspondence and who invited me to visit them.

Ida Weiss was my father's first cousin. I had visited them once before during a Christmas vacation in the 30s when they lived in Nuremberg. There, her husband Nathan was in the Lebkuchen wholesale business. I don't remember how they ended up in San Francisco nor what his livelihood was there. They have two sons, Fred and Sid. Fred is my age and Sid a few years older. Beside being related, Fred and I quickly became good friends.

Using my old military identification card and wearing my Air National Guard uniform, I had no trouble hitchhiking a ride on a military plane to San Francisco.

I spend a week or 10 days with the Weisses sightseeing in and around San Francisco. This was my first visit to the West coast. I then hitchhiked to the East Coast by the same method that

brought me to San Francisco. I remember it took several days and several change of airplanes to work my way back to Philadelphia via Ft. Dix, but I had a lot more time than money, so that was not a problem. Eating in enlisted men's mess halls and sleeping in transient barracks while waiting for airplanes going the right direction and with space for me took a lot of chutzpah, since I had resigned from the reserves 3 months previous. But of course by then the Korean War had broken out and nobody questioned anybody in the military.

Back in Philadelphia, I moved back with the Marxes and began job hunting. My timing was not ideal for two reasons - #1: The country was just coming out of a recession and jobs were not plentiful (the build-up for the war had not started yet); and # 2, one of the local baseball teams (I don't remember whether it was the Phillies or the A's) had just won the pennant, and personnel managers were more interested in the World Series than interviewing job candidates.

It took about two weeks of knocking on doors to land my first post-college job, becoming a design engineer with I-T-E Circuit Breaker Co. I stayed with them about 15 months designing medium voltage switchgear for industrial plants and large commercial buildings during the first year and performing functional tests and UL testing in their lab the rest of the time. I remember my very first job, it was designing some of the switchgear for the Alcoa building in Pittsburg. What was unique about it was that they (Alcoa) wanted everything made out of aluminum that could possibly be made out of that material, including things like hinge pins, fasteners, the bus bars and wiring. Money was no object. So, everything was special and taught me a lot of things I did not learn in engineering school.

I saved enough in the first couple of months to make a down payment on my first car. It was a 1949 Plymouth 4-door sedan that I bought from Emil. Grandma had bought him a newer car, a 1950 Dodge. The car was roomy, reliable, totally unglamorous and served me well until I succumbed to the new car itch in 1954. That was a Volkswagen, one of the first in Philly. People used to gather around looking it over when I parked somewhere, and you would exchange greetings by beeping the horn when you saw another one on the street.

The years between 1950 and 1956 were the best years of my life up until marriage. I was making enough money to support a modest but for me comfortable lifestyle, had a great circle of friends, had a number of leadership roles, fell in love several times (not always reciprocated) and really had a great time.

The Marx house had a rec room in the daylight basement with an adjoining half bath and a separate entrance. I fixed that up with the help of an interior decorator, furnishing it with wall-to-wall carpeting, designer drapery, a hidabed, desk, easy chair and hi-fi. While I still ate upstairs with Emil and Meta, I lived and entertained in this studio and for the first time had my own space with real privacy if I wanted it. Most of that furniture moved to Seattle with us and the desk went to Detroit with Meryl and is at this writing in her house in Richland.

My principal recreational activities centered around outdoor activities as a member of the Philadelphia chapter of the American Youth Hostel (AYH). We went hiking, camping, canoeing, sailing, and biking nearly every week-end and had weekly square and folk dances. The group included people like Charlie Schoneman and Ruth (they weren't married yet), Dick

Golder and future wife Vida, Trudy and Jim Holland who we are still in touch with, etc. It was a great bunch of people. I was treasurer of the chapter one year and vice chairman for a period of time. I also participated in events sponsored by other AYH chapters, such as a bike trip through part of New England - from Providence RI. to Provincetown on Cape Cod.

One Summer I led a canoe trip to the Quetico Superior Wilderness in Northern Minnesota. There was supposed to be five of us, three from Philly and a couple from Chicago. At the last minute, the couple backed out, so it ended up with three of us. We flew to Chicago, took a train to Ely, Minn. and were outfitted by a local outfitter for a ten day canoe trip in the wilderness. We traveled in one 18 ft. aluminum canoe, which was really loaded early in the trip - until we went through some of the food. The route was a large loop of lakes with a series of portages between them. It was truly wilderness, we didn't see another person from the second day till the last day, some of the lakes probably hadn't been visited by a human being in 5 years. We learned a lot of outdoor survival skills (like making a fire ready for cooking in 10 minutes without the use of a stove or gasoline, neither of which we had with us), had good weather and a good time. It was the only time in my life when I did serious fishing to supplement our diet - successfully, I might add.

There was a popular hiking and horseback riding trail from Valley Forge East through the Amish country known as the Horseshoe Trail. It joined the famous Appalachian Trail near Harrisburg, I think. What made it unique was that there were a series of hostels with stables near the trail about a days ride apart. One of my best friends and fellow horseback riding aficionado - Hans Thalheimer - and I had quite an adventure one year taking advantage of that and spending a week on horseback. It was quite an adventure and learning experience to ride 20-30 miles per day and having the responsibility of caring for, feeding, stabling and saddling our horses. We talked about doing it again in a future year but it ended up being a one-shot deal. Hans and I still communicate at least once a year and reminisce about that trip when we see each other.

The Philadelphia chapter of the AYH was also responsible for my learning to sail. We would drive to Barnegat Bay or Cape May on the New Jersey shore on a Saturday morning, rent one or more sailboats for the weekend and spend Saturday night folk dancing and sleeping a little at a Youth Hostel.

I also participated in a young adult group affiliated with one of Philadelphia's conservative synagogues. There, the main activity was Sunday night dances. Every Sunday the group from a different synagogue would be responsible for arranging the dance. There were 4 or 5 synagogues in the association, so it was not too burdensome on any one group. It was where Jewish boy met Jewish girl. Emil was not interested in the AYH, but we frequently went together to the dances.

Also under the aegis of the synagogue was a soccer team which I played for a season or two. This was a Sunday afternoon activity. We played against teams from the various ethnic social clubs that were part of the Philly scene.

For a long time, probably a couple of years, Emil and I and a couple of friends used to go every Wednesday evening to the "Schwitz" (steam baths). The Camac Baths were a real

Philadelphia institution, left over from when this was a weekly ritual with Eastern European Jews. There was a men's side and a woman's side, never the twain mingled. We had this regular routine of going to the steam room, then the sauna, then getting a rub-down by a masseur, and then we would go to a nearby pizza parlor for a pizza and a pitcher of beer and play either poker, pinochle or hearts till midnight.

Another favorite activity of Emil and I was to go horseback riding on a Sunday morning from one of the many riding stables that were adjacent to parks in suburban Philly.

Sunday was Grandma and Meta's day off from cooking, and we generally went to one of our two favorite Chinese restaurants for supper.

I'm sure you heard the story of how Elaine and I met several times before, but I'll repeat it again for the sake of the record. I met George and his wife Elaine Peters at a folk dance in Philadelphia, became friendly with them and would visit them occasionally after they moved to Towson, MD (a suburb of Baltimore) in 1953. At the same time, Elaine Haidt was going to Johns Hopkins in Baltimore, studying to become a Nurse Anesthetist. The two Elaines met at a folk dance in Baltimore. The Peters had a son (Ross) by then, needed a baby sitter from time to time and Elaine Haidt needed the money, so she baby sat for them occasionally. One weekend in the spring of 1954 the Peters invited me to Baltimore to meet Elaine and go to a square dance. We stayed in touch. That summer, Elaine interrupted her schooling to work at a children's summer camp near Pittsfield, Mass. as the Camp Nurse. I visited her there, traveling by bicycle from Hyde Park, NY and staying at a series of Youth Hostels on the way. I remember taking her to the nearby Tanglewood Music Festival one afternoon. I was also there after her graduation from Johns Hopkins in September, to take her to the train for her return to Miami. We maintained correspondence. In November 1955, she decided that she needed to leave Miami and took advantage of an offer from her former classmate Mary Earl (who had moved to Philadelphia) to share her house. I was waiting at the steps of the house when her car, loaded with all her worldly goods, pulled up.

New Years Eve 1955 and New Years Day 1956 was a celebration that sticks in my mind. The Philadelphia Council of the AYH had been going to Hickory Run State Park over that holiday for several years, and this year was no exception. There was an old mansion in the park, which we rented. That particular year we had a great crowd, including the Schonemans, the Hollands, Joe Dlugash (the perennial president of the council) Dick Golder and all the other regulars and friends of several years. Elaine was with me, and so was Blacky, my cocker spaniel. There were the usual folk and square dancing, the usual ban of alcoholic beverages was slightly modified by virtue of the presence of champagne and wine in moderate quantities, and we had a great New Years party. Some of my friends expected me to announce my engagement to Elaine at that time, but that would wait another 6 weeks. I remember everybody pitching in to helping cook a turkey dinner, and inviting the park's caretaker, whose nickname was "Dutch". He was very well disposed to the AYH, since we always left the park and the building in better shape than we found it. We all slept in sleeping bags in the various rooms of the mansion.

A pretty nice bonus that Christmas from the company I worked for at the time, United Engineers and Constructors, was used to buy an engagement ring at Bailey, Bank and Biddle, the

most prestigious jeweler in Philly. I surprised Elaine with it on Valentine's Day 1956. The next day it was my turn to be surprised by a 30th birthday party. Of course the highlight of the party was the announcement of our engagement, and Elaine showing off her ring. We were married that August (the 26th).

We arranged the wedding ourselves, with Elaine's father giving her a generous check for it. It was a lovely wedding. The ceremony took place in a suite at 2601 Parkway in Philadelphia, a new large apartment complex, and we had a sit-down dinner at the restaurant there. We had about 75 people, including all the uncles and aunts on both sides of the family and many of our friends. Elaine and George Peters were the bridesmaid and best man. A few of the cousins were a little put out for not being invited, but we just couldn't afford it and drew the line there.

For our honeymoon, we drove to New England, visiting Cape Cod, Martha's Vinyard, Rhode Island and Connecticut. It was my first non-hostelling and non-tenting vacation.

Our first home was a 1-bedroom apartment on the second floor of an old brownstone in the heart of the city, 12th & Walnut. The rooms were big with 10 ft. ceilings and quite nice. The location was ideal, we both walked to work and could even come home during lunch time. I worked then for United Engineers and Constructors on Broad and Arch St. and Elaine at Jefferson Hospital, which was on 10th & Walnut St. only 2 blocks away. We parked our car, the Volkswagen, at a small side street two blocks away.

After about living 6 month on Walnut Street, we heard about an experiment in urban renewal which sounded interesting. It involved creating a cooperative housing project by rehabilitating a block of buildings in a run-down neighborhood not too far from downtown. It was sponsored by the Society of Friends (Quakers) in that they made available the money for the purchase of the property and its rehabilitation. I don't recall any of the financial details but I believe our share of the cost was around \$10,000. Besides being inter-generational and inter-racial, one could work off most of the mortgage down-payment in sweat equity. We looked into it, liked what we saw and plunged in. The project consisted of converting a square block of old 3-story houses which were basically sound into modern apartments. When we started, about half the houses had already been modernized and were occupied. We worked on the second half. Elaine did lots of paint removing, painting, scraping and sanding. I designed and actually build the kitchen cabinets for about 24 units, using the well-equipped wood shop in the community building. While the cabinet work wasn't fancy, just basic 3/4" plywood, the cabinets were functional and looked good (ours were a bit fancier, thanks to finding a bargain in some 3/4" birch marine plywood about this time). I also helped pour concrete for several basement floors, which was not nearly as much fun as building the cabinets. All of our spare time for several months went into this, with most satisfactory results. The apartments were a mix of one, two and three bedroom units. We got a three bedroom, one bath unit on the third floor. An empty lot across the street served as the parking area for the residents, and a laundry in the basement of one of the houses had enough wash machines and dryers to accommodate the demand. From a sociological point of view, the experiment was a huge success. There were approximately 75 of us from all walks of life, all ages, religions and races. Since most of us had all worked together on the rehabilitation before moving in, we knew each other well, and established a real community feel. It was probably the most ideal housing situation we ever had.

The only negative experience was the one time when we came home after work to find our door jimmied and the apartment ransacked by a thief. He made off with Elaine's fur coat, a pair of gold cuff links and my gold pinky ring, one of my suits, and a bunch of items of little monetary value but importance which needed to be replaced. We had insurance so were not financially hurt, but we sure felt violated and it was a pain to go through the replacement process. Our first floor neighbor, who was retired, spent most of his time at home and considered himself the neighborhood watchdog was also very unhappy for failing in his self-appointed assignment.

The building at the NE corner of 8th and Fairmount St. was the administrative headquarters building, and the project took its name from that location - 8th & Fairmount Friends Housing. It also had a small auditorium and a well equipped wood shop in the basement. It was on Christmas Eve 1958, while using that shop that I lost the end of the little finger on my left hand. I was jointing a board, the board split and my finger ended in the rotating blade. It took me quite a while to get over the psychological trauma. The fact that I was unemployed at that time didn't help. But I'm jumping ahead a little bit.

It was while living at 8th and Fairmount that we took a couple of vacations cruising the Chesapeake Bay in chartered sailboats.

I had gotten laid off from United Engineers and Constructors around that time, one of the few times in my life when I was involuntarily without a job. Knowing that the project I was working on was coming to a close, I had previously applied for a number of jobs, including one at Boeing when one of their recruiter came through town. He was specifically looking for people to work on the B-52 being built in Wichita, Kansas. On December 31st I got a call from a Boeing personnel representative in Seattle, making me an offer to work there as a Facilities Engineer on the Bomarc missile production plant. At that time, I had only the vaguest idea where Seattle was. Since this was the only job offer I had, the salary was pretty decent, and they were willing to pay for moving our belongings, it didn't take me long to accept. Also we knew of one couple, former AYHers, who had left Philly for Boeing in Seattle and who had reported good things about the area.

It didn't take Boeing long to react to my acceptance. By the end of the second week in January 1959, the movers came and packed us. We drove to New York to say good-bye to our relatives, had a look at the Boat Show which was happening in New York every year about that time and which was the biggest in the country and took off for parts West on Monday morning, January 18th. Of course, the Volkswagen was loaded to the gills. This was our first, and to this date our only transcontinental crossing by car. I was anxious to start the job, so we took the most direct route, Pennsylvania Turnpike, Ohio Turnpike, Indiana Turnpike, through Kansas, Nebraska to Denver, then across the Rockies to Salt Lake City, then North to Pendleton, the Tri-cities, Vantage and over Snoqualmie Pass to Seattle. We did a little sightseeing in the Denver area, to show Elaine my college haunts, and I remember touring the Mormon Tabernacle in Salt Lake City. Except for bucking a blizzard in Kansas, the trip was uneventful but not very comfortable. The heat output of the Volkswagen engine was notoriously poor, the outside temperatures a good part of the trip below freezing so we really had to bundle up. We arrived in

Seattle either Saturday night, Jan. 24th or the next day. At any rate, I presented myself to the employment office on Monday, Jan. 26th 1959 and went on the payroll that day, making that my official company service anniversary day, the day when I got a new batch of vacation, sick leave and pension benefits.

When we first headed for Seattle, we figured on being here a couple of years. Little did we guess then that those couple of years would stretch into more than forty-eight at this writing.

We stayed at the Max Ivar Motel (still in existence at 4th & Michigan but renamed) for a few days, chosen because it had kitchen facilities and was close to Boeing. Then we found a 2-bedroom duplex on Beacon Hill, also close to my work site which was then known as the Missile Production Center. It was a converted Ford automobile assembly plant, build in the early 30's which had been taken over by the federal government and leased to Boeing. My first assignment was to design the electrical modifications to the assembly line for switching from the Bomarc I to the Bomarc II missile. Bomarc was a ground-to-air missile being installed at a number of bases on the East Coast. I was part of a team, which included a newly appointed supervisor and several new hire engineers from out of town like me. It was a good group.

It didn't take long for Elaine to find a job. She went to work as an anesthetist at Maynard hospital located on Pill Hill downtown. (It is no more). She worked in OB.

The best news, however was that Elaine was pregnant. We had been trying unsuccessful for several month and both of us had several tests to pinpoint the cause of the infertility problem. The D & C Elaine had in Philly shortly before we left must have done the trick. Counting backwards from David birthday, Elaine conceived about the first week we were in Seattle.

Recreation wise, one of the first things we did was to buy ski equipment and learn to ski. And next came the purchase of my first sailboat, a Geary 18 (also known as a Flattie) designed by the famous Seattle naval architect Ted Geary for the Seattle Yacht Club. It was an old wooden hull, requiring untold hours of sanding, painting and fiberglassing to make it sea-worthy and was a good lesson in what not to buy. I joined the Corinthian Yacht Club in order to participate in some serious racing. I think it was our first race, in March, with Elaine crewing for me that we capsized before even starting the race. Elaine was fished out of the water very rapidly, which was a good thing considering she was pregnant and the water was very cold. I stayed in the water with the boat until we got towed back to the dock. That event had two consequences. No.1, the chief photographer of the Seattle Times, Joseph Scalea, was there to take my picture in the water which was appeared on Page 1 of the Seattle Times that evening (it must have been an awful slow day for news). And No. 2, when I gave Elaine a hand to pull her out of the water, she got a bad grip on my hand resulting in a spiral fracture of one of the bones on my left hand. So that was the end of my sailing for a couple of month. By mutual agreement, it was also the end of Elaine's career as a yacht racing crew. I remained active in sailboat racing that season by becoming chairman of Corinthian's race committee.

We also took up camping with enthusiasm. That was the year when we bought most of our camping gear, including the tent, pot set, stove and lantern we had until giving it to our son and his family in 2006.

An interesting event happened on one of the camping trips that summer. Friends from Philadelphia, the Colvins, were visiting us and we went camping together at Deer Park, a campground in the Olympics near Port Angeles. One of the Springs of the well-known outdoor photography team of Bob and Ira Spring came through, admired our tent and asked permission to take some pictures, which we granted (we signed a release). Perhaps a year later, we received galley proofs of a page from a book called "This is Washington" which included a photo taken then. It was one of those large coffee table books full of photos. The same picture also appeared in the Sunday magazine section of the Seattle Times. We still have the clipping in one of the albums.

It didn't take us long to discover that Seattle was also a hotbed of square and folk dancing, so we could and did continue that activity.

With the news that we would soon be parents came the desire to have a home of our own. So one Summer Sunday afternoon we went out and bought ourselves a house, just like that. I don't remember how many houses we looked at that day. Maybe two or three, certainly no more. We had three requirements, the house had to have a view, room for a shop and be affordable. 1516 - 37th Ave. met those requirements. The view was (and still is) extraordinary - Lake Washington and the Cascades from Mt. Baker to Mt. Rainier. It had two bedrooms, a bath and a balcony on the second floor, a living room, dining room and pretty decent kitchen on the first floor and a half basement. We didn't know about bargaining, paying the asking price of \$11,400. With minimum down payment and a mortgage of 5 1/2%, the going rate at that time, our payments were around \$65 per month. I don't remember what my salary was then, but the house was definitely affordable. We moved in 1 August. The back bedroom because of its view became the master bedroom. The front bedroom became the nursery. I remember announcing David's birth to the across-the-street neighbor, Gerald Grace by hanging a blue towel out the bedroom window. He took a picture of it and gave it to us later. It is still in our album. The most obvious deficiency of the house was the lack of closet space in the bedrooms, so soon after David was born I got busy putting in a large closet in the back bedroom. I would eventually panel the basement, install a new electrical panel and redo some of the wiring. Sometimes, my do-it-yourself projects got me in trouble. I remember burning off paint under the eaves of the house in preparation for repainting, when the torch put a roof shingle on fire. I managed to climb down the ladder, fill a bucket of water, climb up again and douse it before it had a chance to spread but that was scary. The house could easily have gone up in flames.

Another event that year would have a major impact on my career for the rest of my working life at Boeing. I had completed the (electrical) design of converting the Bomarc I assembly line to Bomarc II and was assigned to the Minuteman Missile project, which Boeing had won a short while before. The Monday after Thanksgiving, I reported to my new boss at Plant 2, and was told I would be writing criteria for the missile assembly facilities which will be built at the Air Force Plant 77 in Ogden, Utah. Having worked as a traditional electrical designer (on a drafting board) my entire previous 9 year engineering career, this was quite a change. I had no idea what was involved and had no experience doing engineering writing. At any rate, I was a fast learner, found I enjoyed writing, had a real talent for it and spent the rest of my 31 years at Boeing in assignments which involved engineering writing.

That December was the inaugural of our annual letter. It was modeled after an annual letter we had received from Al Rosenberg, a friend and square dance caller whose dances we used to attend regularly in Haddonfield, NJ and who was transferred by his employer, RCA, to the West Coast about the same time as we moved to Seattle. Unfortunately, we did not have the foresight to save a copy of that first one nor the next several. Our copies are from 1964 on.

As you can see, 1959 was an eventful and exciting year for us.

The summer of 1960, the Schoneman's came to visit us for a planned vacation together. Our destination was Yosemite and Yellowstone. What I remember was that David (age 8 month) would have nothing to do with Ruth, demanding Elaine's care the whole time. We spend a couple of days in San Francisco on the way home, and have a picture of David in his mother's arms on a cable car.

Also starting that year I took a number of week-long trips for Boeing to such places as Santa Maria, CA, and Minuteman missile bases in North and South Dakota, Wyoming and Missouri. These were generally demanding but pleasant diversions from the daily work routine.

Subsequent events are chronicled in our annual letters. I will read them over in the future and elaborate as the events warrant and memory permits.

However, as I mentioned in my opening paragraph, there are several more recent events which I want to tell you about.

One of these was discovering (or being discovered by) an unknown relative - Frederika (Friedel) Seidl. She wrote me in the Fall of '78, identifying herself as the granddaughter of Leopold Birn, my grandfather's youngest brother (he is the one who married a gentile). She got my address through Bella or Raya in Israel. Not only did she invite me for a visit, she send me a copy of the Birn family genealogy back to the end of the 18th century, which she had researched and put together. We were to meet in the Spring of '79 when Boeing sent me to Munich to coordinate the AWACS effort. She and her husband Albert are wonderful people, and we got together a number of times during our 4 month stay in Germany that year. Friedel speaks good English, so Elaine as well as I could communicate easily with her. We have stayed in touch ever since. I write her in English, and she writes me in German (her husband Albert died a number of years ago).

Now a fast forward to 1989. In the late spring of that year, I received an invitation from the government of the County (Landkreis) of Würzburg to take part in the dedication of a memorial to the Holocaust victims of the county. The memorial was a rebuild synagogue in one of the villages in the county which had a Jewish population similar to Estenfeld. I was invited because Estenfeld, my father's birthplace is in the county and they somehow knew about me (probably from Tony in Estenfeld). They offered to pay my air fare and all other expenses for the four day activities. I accepted after finding out that Esther and Dov Sadeh (from Connecticut) and Friedel (from Munich) would also be there. We were wine and dined and televised and taken on various trips. The part I especially wanted to talk about was my experience in Estenfeld. On one

of the evenings we had a dinner in Estenfeld, where all the movers and shakers of the community showed up. Prior to the dinner, I stopped in to see Tony Birn and his wife Emilia. Another man was there, who Tony introduced to me. His name was Max Barthel, and he said he had something for me which he will bring to the dinner. Sure enough, at the dinner, he gave me a cardboard carton, telling me that it was something his parents had gotten from my uncle Friedel and he wanted me to have it. Due to the press of activities and my limited conversational German ability (he spoke no English) I didn't get a chance to talk to him very much. It's hard to imagine my surprise, when I unpacked the carton in my hotel room later that evening. The content consisted of a gold wrist watch apparently never worn in its original box, a Meissen figurine china bowl, a small china sculpture of an owl and a silver plated flask decorated with figurines which I found out was intended for storage of tea. These were all things which were kept by the Barthels approximately 48 years before making their way to me. After I got home, I wrote him a long letter telling him about the highlights of my life in the US and asking him for more details and about his life. I got a similar letter back, including a snapshot of he and I swimming together in the Main river taken by Uncle Friedel about 1936 or '37. I did not remember anything about him from those days. He is about 3 or 4 years my senior, a retired secondary school teacher, married, with one daughter. During WWII he got himself captured by American troops and spend some time in prisoner-of-war camps in Oregon and South Carolina working in the fields. His parents bought the Birn house on Zinnergasse in Estenfeld from Uncle Friedel after Kristallnacht in 1939. As far as I can determine they paid a reasonable (non-distress) price and were genuine friends of the family despite the risk associated with that action at that time in Nazi Germany. His sister inherited the house and still lives there with her family. We have stayed in touch via our annual letter.

At the same time, I met another remarkable man - Christian Will. He also lives in Estenfeld, was a Jesuit seminarian, a journalist, historian, writer, lawyer and at the time of our visit one of the representatives to the Bavarian State government from the region. In his youth during the Hitler regime, he worked actively in the anti-Nazi underground, a most dangerous calling. We Birn representatives (Esther, Dov, Friedel and I) had dinner with him one evening and spend another afternoon with him. Unfortunately, he spoke no English and I missed a good part of the stories he told about Estenfeld, the Jewish population in the area and some of his struggles. He did give me a copy of the book he wrote about the history of Estenfeld, which has a chapter about the Jews in Estenfeld, and devotes several pages to our family which include several photos of family members

A few years ago, I rediscovered another organization that was involved in my past. The organization is called "Kindertransport" - (German for Train Children). In 1991, there was a short article in Simon Wiesenthal Foundation newsletter about individuals who were involved in the "Kindertransport" to join an organization being formed. That rang a bell. I remembered that my travel out of Germany to the USA was labeled Kindertransport at the time. So I contacted the organization and learned that there were many children like me who left Germany without their parents. It's something I may have known a long time ago but didn't have any recollection. Here is a quote from a pamphlet put out by the organization:

" History of the Kindertransport.

Between November 1938 and September 1939 nearly 10,000 children escaped with their lives from the Nazi Holocaust. The children, whose age ranged from a few months to 17 years, had to flee alone, without their parents.

The British government and its people, through their compassion and generosity, at a cost of 50 British pounds per child, agreed to save these children by bringing them to Great Britain. A handful escaped to other countries including Holland, Belgium, France and the USA, but one and a half million children could not be saved, and perished at the hands of Hitler's Germany. The children traveled by train from Germany, Austria, Danzig, and Czechoslovakia, through Europe and on to England. This exodus of children without their parents was given the German name "Kindertransport". In Great Britain, they were scattered to various private homes, hostels, schools and farms, throughout England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland. The vast majority never saw their parents again. They managed to live, but have never forgotten!"

It is estimated that approximately 2500 of these "Kinder" (children) eventually immigrated to North America, and it is these individuals, and their families, who make up the Kindertransport organization.

A conversation with the president of the organization revealed that only a handful - probably less than 200, emigrated direct to the USA as I did. At any rate, I joined the organization and placed an ad in their newsletter asking for anyone who came on the Conte Di Savoya to contact me. I had a letter from one woman who came on the ship a month after I did. She came from Vienna and is now living in a NY suburb. I called her up, we had a long conversation and we will try to get together some time when I am in the East. Through a directory published by the organization, I also got in contact with a man and a woman who lived in Stuttgart the same time as I. The woman is a couple years younger than I and remembers even less than I do, but the man is my contemporary, and we may even have been classmates. We will also try to get together some time. He lives in California.

In 2001, a woman named Iris Posner founded a new organization called "One Thousand Children (OTC)". It is made up of children who came directly to the US from Europe between 1934 and 1943 without their parents. Her research showed that about 1400 children fall into that category (including myself) and because of that and the name "Kindertransport" was already taken, she chose OTC. I attended the first (and probably last) national convention of the organization at the Palmer House in Chicago July 1 to 3, 2002. There were about 80 of us, many with spouses. Elaine did not come with me, she needed to recover from the month-long trip to Europe we came back from two days before. It was most interesting to hear the various stories, many similar but different. I, too, gave a presentation. It was about my impression of the trip to Germany I had just come back from. Since the OTC National Convention described above, Iris Posner, its president has been very active publicizing the organization, including editing and getting published a book about this unknown part of America's response to the Holocaust. It is told in the words of the children and their rescuers and includes ten pages taken from these, my memoirs (this makes me a published author!). The name of the book is DON'T WAVE GOODBYE with the subtitle "The Children's Flight from Nazi Persecution to American Freedom" edited by Philip K. Jason & Iris Posner and published by Praeger Publishers, Westport CT in 2004.

It is now September 2007. The previous updates were in May of 2007, August 2006, October 2004, then November 2002, ~~My last major~~ and the one before that was in October 1998. I will continue to do more updating and editing as I read these pages from time to time and learn more about my growing-up years. You got a copy of what I consider my first draft in July 1992, an update around 1996 and an update in 2002. I will also include as an appendix copies of the original German language version of the letters which are translated above. They convey a feel that the translations do not. I have put the originals of the various letters and other material in protective plastic in a three-ring binder.

Love,

your husband, father, father-in-law & grandfather, Marty

P.S. As always your comments, questions and suggestions for improvement are welcome.

This document is on my computer under the file name MARTY2.DOC.
It is written in Microsoft "Word", Version 2003.

